No. 603 JULY 18, 1908 5 CENTS

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 *Seventh Ave., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1908, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 603. NEW YORK, July 18, 1908. Price Five Cents.

By Order of the Emperor

OR,

NICK CARTER'S SPECIAL BODYGUARD.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF TALIKA.

The hour had arrived when Nick Carter was to leave Japan to return to his home.

With everything in readiness and all preparations made, the detective sought the emperor to say his adieus, and was received, as he always was by the mikado, cordially and graciously.

"Mr. Carter," said the ruler, "I do not know in just what words to thank you for all that you have done here. You came to Japan as a special agent for the secretary of state of your own country, to discover if there were in truth any reasons to apprehend trouble between our countries, and you have found, I am glad to say, that the heart of Japan is in the right place, and that there is no cause for uneasiness—that the agitators are in reality only a few, and that the real feeling in Japan is one of entire friendliness."

"I have, sir," replied Nick.

"I wish to say to you that in making these discoveries you have served me quite as much as you have fulfilled the wishes of him who sent you. In returning to your own home you take my thanks with you; and I have here an autograph letter to your great president, which I wish you would deliver to him in person."

"I will do so with pleasure, sir."

"It requires no answer; it is merely an expression of personal regard and has no relation whatever to affairs of state."

"The president will be glad to receive it, your majesty."

"Remember always, Mr. Carter, that in Japan you have many friends, not the least among whom is the mikado. Good-by."

The emperor extended his hand in American fashion. The detective took it; then he hesitated, and the emperor said:

"There is something else that you wished to say?"

"Only that if it pleases your majesty I would be glad to say 'good-by' to Talika, the geisha." *

The emperor struck a gong and gave directions that Talika be summoned at once; and while they waited the mikado remarked:

"Possibly you may not have heard that some acquaintances of yours are to sail with you in the same ship."

*Read "Talika, the Geisha Girl," No. 602 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

"No, your majesty, I had not heard. May I ask who is going?"

"General Lakatira applied to me yesterday for leave of absence and permission to travel, which I granted, of course. Also his son-in-law, the young man of English birth."

"Tom Harnett?"

"Yes," smiled the emperor.

"And they are going to America with me, on the same ship?"

"Such is their intention, I believe."

"That is good news indeed."

"Harnett, as you know, was born here, and is a Japanese subject."

"Yes."

"He is, nevertheless, of English parentage. But he has never been out of the country. He goes now to see your country, and then the country of his fathers. When he returns I shall give him a post of confidence here at the palace. I believe him to be a very worthy young man."

"There is none better, your majesty," said Nick, with enthusiasm. Without his aid, I doubt if I could have succeeded in unmasking Maoki and his plots." *

"I can well believe you."

"And we must not forget little Talika, your majesty. Without her, Harnett and I would both have been at fault."

"Yes. I know."

"Her assistance has been invaluable."

The emperor was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"My heart sorrows for Talika, Mr. Carter."

"Indeed, your majesty? May I ask why? You have taken her into the household of the palace and surely——"

"Yes; it is true; but only the shell remains here at my court. The visible body remains here, and outwardly she will be all smiles, and tenderness, and patience. But that bright spirit that is hers, that loving heart of Talika's will journey with you across the ocean and over the world, for she has given both to you. Have you not seen it?"

"I had feared it. But a little time will remedy all that. She will forget it all soon."

"Ah, Mr. Carter, you little know Talika."

"I wonder why she does not come?" murmured the detective, whose time was getting short.

"I will ascertain," replied his majesty, striking the gong again.

The same attendant who had responded to the former summons replied to this one, and he prostrated himself at the feet of the emperor. Stripped of the grandiloquent phraseology with which the Japanese always address their superiors, his information was to the effect that Talika could not be found anywhere in the palace, although diligent search was still being made for her.

"But where is she? What has become of her?" demanded the detective, after he had listened to what the servant had to say.

"Alas, honorable sir, we do not know," was the reply.

"Do you mean that she has left the palace?"

"It would seem so, most illustrious one."

"But to do that she must have obtained permission."

"Yes, most ex——"

"Has she done so?"

"No, honora——"

"Have you inquired?"

"Yes, your——"

"Are there not guards at every entrance?"

"There are, exalted and honorable——"

"Has none of the guards seen Talika this morning?"

"Inquiry is now being made through the palace, illustrious sir, and——"

A stir at the door interrupted them at this moment, and the captain of the palace guard entered and prostrated himself at the feet of his sovereign. Being bidden to rise, he turned in reply to a sharp question from the detective, who said:

"Has Talika been seen to leave the palace this morning?"

"No, most——"

"Just reply to my questions, if you please, and cut out all that honorables and exalteds, and the rest of them. Have you made inquiry?"

"I have."

"Are you positive that she has not passed one of your guards?"

"I am."

"Would they deceive you?"

"They are Samauri, sir. What they tell me is truth."

"That will do for the present," said the detective; and then he waited until the officer and the servant had both left the room before he addressed the emperor again.

"May I ask your majesty for an opinion about this strange event?" he said then.

The mikado smiled.

"I think, Mr. Carter," he said, "that Talika has fled temporarily from the palace in order to avoid the necessity of saying good-by to you."

"But why should she do that?"

"Because she would not have you know that she suffered, and possibly she could not trust herself again in your presence without revealing the truth to you. That is the only explanation that I can suggest."

Nick was thoughtful for a moment.

"It is too bad," he said. "Heaven knows that I have done nothing to win her——"

"All who know you at all, Mr. Carter, would understand that. But you have twice saved her life;

*For a complete history of Nick Carter's Mission to Japan, see Nos. 601 and 602 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, "Nick Carter in Japan" and "Talika, the Geisha Girl."

you have rescued her from a fate which to her would have been thrice worse than death itself, for Talika is as pure as the snow on the mountains. She has given her heart to you, but it was given freely and without thought of return."

"But how did she leave the palace, since she did not pass the guard?"

"Have you forgotten, Mr. Carter, that when you were here, before our war with Russia, you learned that there were many secret methods of entering and leaving the palace?" *

"No; but I did not suppose that any of them were known to Talika."

"Nor I; but who knows? She may have discovered one by accident. However, the fact remains that she has temporarily disappeared. When she returns, as I have no doubt she will after your departure, I will tell her that you wished to see her, and that we searched for her. It will delight and please her even more than hollow good-bys would do."

"Thank you, your majesty. And now I really must go. May I say in parting that I am very proud of your majesty's friendship? And may I add that if the time should ever come when you have need of my services, you have only to send for me?"

"I know that, Mr. Carter."

The detective took his leave then, and hastened to the train which was to bear him to the steamship.

But all the way down there he was worried vaguely about Talika. He felt a premonition that he had not seen or heard the last of her, although he could not have told what form that premonition took.

So absorbed was he in thoughts of her, and of all that had happened since he came to Japan, that he momentarily forgot all about the information the mikado had given him relative to General Lakatira and Tom Harnett.

It was not until he had passed aboard the ship and given his two satchels into the care of a steward that it was recalled to him; and then by a hearty slap on the shoulder, delivered by Harnett himself, who came hastily forward with extended hand.

"Isn't it bully, Nick?" he exclaimed. "Yesterday I had no more idea of taking this trip than of going to the moon, and now here I am, bound for America and England. And the general is with me——"

He stopped abruptly in what he was saying, for at that instant a young Japanese passed swiftly between them, brushing against the detective as he did so; and Nick felt that a roll of paper had been thrust into one of his hands.

Involuntarily his fingers closed upon it, and then he turned to gaze after the swiftly moving messenger, who, however, instantly glided out of sight among the people on the deck.

Then he turned his attention to the roll of paper.

*Nick Carter's former experiences in Japan are told in No. 379, NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER'S SPECIAL BODY-GUARD.

The "roll" of paper, if roll it could be called, proved to be a long narrow strip that had been rolled tightly together, and as Nick began to unwind it he discovered that it was a message written in the Japanese, beginning at the top and extending downward along the strip.

The translation of it was as follows:

"HONORABLE MR. CARTER: Beware of dangers which will pursue you across the ocean, even to your own country if it should happen that you do not succumb to them before America is reached. Although General Maoki is now a prisoner and will speedily be condemned to death, his hate has found a way to be revenged upon you, even though he shall be dead when that revenge is consummated. What form that revenge will take or when and how it will be carried out is not known to the writer; nor are the enemies who will go with you on the ship known to the writer; but that those enemies will be there, *is* known, so be watchful, honorable and illustrious one, lest you fall a victim to their machinations.

"The arm of Maoki is long even in death. There are Samauri who have served him, who will be faithful and loyal to his memory and his wishes, even to the extent of taking your life. Do not walk alone upon the decks of the ship at night. Do not eat, save at the general table where all are eating together. Accept nothing from any stranger while on the voyage. Do not stand alone with your back turned toward others, at any time of the day or night. Keep yourself well guarded at all times.

"There are two persons to whom you may impart this information, for they are faithful; but two only. They are Lakatira, the general, and Harnett. Consult with them about this and they will tell you of the wisdom of heeding the warning here given, since they can explain to you the significance of the Samauri oath of allegiance to his master; and some of the Samauri who have served Maoki now seek your life.

"Lastly, if there are secret enemies against you aboard the ship on which you sail, there are also secret friends there, to watch over you. And, oh, honorable sir, do not try to discover those secret friends, lest you place impediments in the way of their service to you.

"That the writer does not sign a name to this document need not make you the less confident of its truth and sincerity."

The detective read the letter through to the end twice.

The translation of it made a curious combination of the stilted phraseology of the Japanese and the directness of the English languages; but he could not doubt its sincerity.

Indeed, there was something about the letter that

appealed to him rather strangely, although he would have found it impossible to explain exactly how it affected him.

Presently he raised his eyes to Harnett, who was watching him.

"Tom," he asked, "did you catch sight of that boy who gave me this note?"

"Can't say that I did, Nick," was the reply.

"I'm sorry. I hoped that you had."

"Why?"

"I would like to question him. I'd like to know where he received this message."

"What is it?"

"Read it for yourself and tell me what you think of it."

He passed the message to his friend and stood watching him while Harnett read it; and he noticed that as Harnett began to undo the roll he gave a slight start, then frowned, and then a strange smile came into his eyes and upon his lips.

But he read the message to the end without comment, after which he passed it back again, still in silence.

"What do you make of it?" asked the detective.

"It seems to be sufficiently plain, doesn't it?" was the interrogative reply.

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he admitted; "but it seems folly to suppose that anybody is pursuing me aboard this ship merely to—oh, pshaw!"

He was silent again for a time, and then he turned suddenly to his companion.

"Tom," he said, "when I passed that message to you just now I watched you rather closely, and I saw something in your face which leads me to the supposition that you know who the author of that message is. I am not familiar enough with Japanese characters to know if it is as individualized as our own handwriting, but I don't know why it shouldn't be so."

He paused, and as Harnett did not reply, he asked bluntly:

"Tom, did you recognize that chirography?"

"You insinuate that I did."

"Answer me, please."

"Yes, I did recognize it the moment my eyes rested upon it. Japanese writing—perhaps it should in our sense be called free-hand printing—is as easily recognizable as yours or mine would be in English."

"I supposed as much. Now, who wrote this message?"

Harnett temporized.

"Isn't it evident," he asked, "that the person who wrote it preferred that you should remain in ignorance of the identity of the author?"

"Yes; but nevertheless I wish to know."

"If you insist, of course——"

"I do insist."

"It was Talika."

The detective did not express any surprise. In fact, he had been prepared for just that reply to his question. But he wondered silently why she had not waited to see him to tell him about it, rather than to do as she had done, avoid him and then write the message to be delivered so strangely.

He turned away for a moment, attracted by a noise on the wharf, and then when he sought to renew the conversation he discovered that Harnett had disappeared.

The moment for casting off the lines had arrived. Looking over the side he saw that the last passenger to come aboard the vessel was General Lakatira, who was followed by three servants; and as soon as they stepped upon the deck the gangplank was drawn out, the lines were cast off, and the great vessel began slowly to move out from its berth. The voyage across the Pacific had begun.

Stepping to one side he read the message through again, and then tearing it into bits, threw it into the water; after which he turned to greet the general, who approached him at that moment with Harnett, and with outstretched hand to greet the detective.

"The emperor told me this morning that you would be a fellow passenger, general," he said.

The general looked surprised; then he murmured interrogatively:

"The emperor told you that?"

"Yes. He informed me when I was taking my departure that you had applied for leave——"

"Ah! Yes; that was it."

It was the detective's turn to be surprised, although he did not manifest it in any way; but he smiled to himself, believing that now he understood the situation thoroughly.

"So," he thought to himself, "this is a friendly conspiracy, after all. The general did not apply for leave, but has been ordered to make this voyage, merely to stand guard over me. General," he added, aloud, turning suddenly upon the old warrior.

"Yes, Mr. Carter?"

"Don't you think that we will understand each other a whole lot better if we are perfectly frank with each other?"

"Why certainly; but, pardon me—to what particular thing do you refer?"

"Look here, general, I wouldn't be Nick Carter if I didn't go into the motives of things, would I?"

"I don't know what you mean, but possibly not."

"Well, I will tell you something that you have already told me, although you don't know that you have done so."

"You surprise me more and more, sir."

"Perhaps. In the first place, you did not apply for leave of absence and permission to travel. You were ordered to make this trip. Isn't that true?"

"Really, Mr. Carter——"

"We'll pass that. Somebody has been making threats against me, and the fact has reached the knowledge of the mikado, and if I can read the signs at all, you were relieved from duty and sent on this

voyage for the specific purpose of standing guard over me. Isn't that also true?"

The general shrugged his shoulders helplessly and the detective smiled broadly.

"There is no use in denying it," he said, "even if the emperor did order you to keep the facts a secret from me. It was all very kind and considerate of him, and I am delighted to have your company, and Tom's, on the voyage. But on my word, it is the first time in all my life when I have been surrounded by protectors."

"I can understand that, Mr. Carter."

"It has always been my lot to protect others, to watch over others, to guard others. I am not sure that I don't feel quite like an emperor myself, with people standing around to protect me from bombs and assassins. It is rather a novel experience."

"Do you resent it, Mr. Carter? The mikado feared that you would."

"N-no; not exactly, although I am frank to say that had I known about it sooner, I would not have permitted it."

"You would have deemed it unnecessary?"

"Decidedly so."

"But his majesty thought otherwise."

"So I perceive."

"And I am here; the ship has sailed, and it is too late to send me back. Besides, it is a great pleasure to me——"

"Of course. I would have been selfish to have objected. But, general!"

"Yes?"

"Now that you *are* here there must be entire frankness between us. I must know what it is you fear, and whom you fear. I must know exactly why the emperor thought it necessary to do this thing. I must know without reservation all that you know or believe about it."

The general was uneasy, and he showed it. After a moment he replied:

"It is distinctly against the orders of his majesty that——"

"One moment, if you please. When his majesty gave those orders he supposed that I would travel all the way across the ocean in ignorance of your real mission. It did not occur to him that I would guess the facts before we were out of the bay. But now that you are here, and that I have discovered why, I insist upon knowing all about it."

"But, Mr. Carter, can I disobey the orders of the emperor?"

"Yes, since those orders did not anticipate this moment."

"His directions were specific——"

"General, I decline to be kept in the dark. Unless you are quite frank with me, we cannot be friends. I refuse to be watched over like a child. I must know who is doing the watching, and what those watchers stand in dread of. Harnett will bear me out, I think, in the justice of my demand. If real danger threatens me, I want to know what it is."

"Very well, Mr. Carter, I will tell you. Will you come to my stateroom?"

"No; come with me to mine."

Without another word the detective turned and led the way to his room, closely followed by General Lakatira and Tom Harnett.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WHO DIED FOR NICK CARTER.

"Now, general, let us have the story," said the detective, as soon as they were comfortably seated in his stateroom. "What is it all about, anyway?"

"If I should boil my reply down to a simple statement of the fact," replied the general, with a smile, "it is merely that your life has been threatened, and that I, with others, have been ordered to take this voyage with you in order to protect you."

"That much, I believe, we had already agreed upon. Who has threatened my life?"

"Maoki."

"He is in prison, is he not?"

"Yes; his body is there, but his influence is as much at liberty as it ever was."

"I don't think I quite understand that, general."

"I am afraid, Mr. Carter, that with all your knowledge of Japan you know very little about our Samauri," was the reply.

"Then I will ask you to enlighten me."

"The original meaning of the Samauri," said the general introspectively, "has almost disappeared—on the surface. Beneath the surface, however, it has as deep significance as it ever did."

"Well?"

"In the days of the Shoguns—in the feudal days of Japan—the Samauri was merely a fighting-man. He had no other calling. He was a warrior and he did nothing but bear arms, and fight for his feudal lord. His loyalty was pledged to that lord, or baron, absolutely, and with a Japanese, loyalty of that sort amounts to fanaticism."

"I have been told that."

"Maoki and his ancestors have been feudal barons of Nippon since our history began, and to all the Samauri who regard themselves as owing allegiance to that family, Maoki in prison is no less their leader than Maoki at the head of his army in the field."

"I can understand that, also."

"Well, Mr. Carter, it was the night before last when a man came to me at my house—a Samauri who belonged to the following of Maoki. But you had done this particular man a great service, and——"

"I had done him a service?"

"Yes."

"How, pray?"

"Do you recall leaping into the middle of the street

one day two weeks or more ago, and rescuing a child from death? A child that was directly in the path of a big automobile approaching at great speed? Do you recall that circumstance?"

"Yes," replied the detective thoughtfully.

"Well, that child was the grandson of the Samauri I have referred to."

"Ah! And for that reason——"

"For that reason—because you saved the life of that child—the man I have mentioned came to me and told me of the plot that had been hatched against you. He belonged to Maoki; his allegiance and loyalty were as much the property of General Maoki as mine is to my emperor. But all the same, you had saved the life of his grandchild, and he could not let you be made to suffer. So he came to me."

"And for once forgot his loyalty, eh?"

"Aye; but he paid the price."

"The price? What do you mean?"

"I mean that after he had revealed to me all that it was necessary I should know, in order to take measures for your protection, he straightway went out and killed himself."

"*What!*"

"I thought you knew something of the history of the Samauri, Mr. Carter?"

"But—great heavens, man! It amounts to that man giving his life to save mine."

"That, sir, is exactly what he intended to do when he came to me," said the general calmly.

"And do you mean to tell me that you understood when he came to you that he intended to do such a monstrous thing as that?"

"Certainly. There was nothing else for him to do."

"But——"

"Having repudiated his master, he had to die, and by his own hand. It is the unwritten law of his kind."

"And he had already determined upon that before he went to you with the story?"

"Certainly."

"In other words, he deliberately committed suicide in order that he might save me, who had happened, by accident, to save his grandchild?"

"Yes."

"It is incomprehensible!"

"Not if you thoroughly understand the life-training of the Samauri, sir. He was face to face with two obligations. One of those was to his master, whose soldier he was and whose family he had served since his birth, as had his fathers before him; the other was his conscience, as you would call it."

"And he chose the latter, even though——"

"He chose the latter because it involved his personal honor, while the former was merely a matter of pride of loyalty. He could not do as he did do and live, for that would be continual dishonor; but he could choose it, and die, for thus his honor would go untarnished to the grave. Such is the religion of the Samauri."

"The man's name? What was it?"

"That, Mr. Carter, I can never reveal to you."

"And he killed himself! Poor chap!"

"Don't mourn for him, sir. He died bravely, willingly, gladly, since he believed that he had performed the highest of duties when he made his own death necessary. He killed himself with the short sword of the Samauri."

"And you knew when he left you that he intended to do so?"

"Certainly."

"And made no effort to prevent it?"

"Certainly not."

"My dear general, that is a species of barbarism that I confess I cannot understand in one so gentle by nature as you are."

"That, sir, is because you are not a Nipponese. You must not understand that it was not done to avoid punishment for the betrayal; nor through remorse; nor from any cause whatever save pride of spirit in giving up his life for a principle. That is all."

"I would like to ask you one question, general."

"Well?"

"Did the man—you will not tell me his name, you say—did he leave behind him persons who were dependent upon him for a living? Is there a widow, or——"

"I am happy to say, Mr. Carter, that all whom he left behind him are well provided for. You must understand that the act was not committed for you as an individual, but for what you did, and as a principle. In serving you he did not consider that he was serving Nicholas Carter, but his conscience; his idea of right. It is rather a fine distinction, I know, but I trust I have made it more or less plain."

"I think I understand you. There are, however, some things about the Japanese character that are quite beyond me."

"Possibly; but is it not so that you will find that true with all the peoples of the earth?"

"Perhaps it is."

"And now, sir, shall we touch upon what it was that the Samauri came to tell me?"

"Yes, general. I confess that the great sacrifice of that man had driven it utterly from my mind. Lovers sometimes swear that they would give their lives for the loved ones. I have heard and read of men giving up their lives to save others, but this is the first time it ever was brought home to me. That a man, and an utter stranger, should calmly sacrifice his life that mine might be spared, is incomprehensible; it is overwhelming!"

"It would not be if you understood the character, the training and the lives of the Samauri. You must keep in mind the fact that he did not literally die for you, but for a principle."

"Oh, well, it seems the same thing to me. Now, what was the tale he told you?"

"When he was brought into my presence he drew

his short sword—the Samauri carry two, you know—and laid the blade of it across his heart. Then he returned it to its sheath, and after I had sent others from the room, he began."

"Pardon me; you understood already why he was there, did you not?"

"I understood that he had something to impart to me, and that the telling would cost him his life; I recognized him as one of Maoki's men. I knew no more than that."

"But you could have stopped him from telling what he had to say, even though he had practically begun it?"

"And have thus merited his everlasting contempt; yes."

"You permitted him to continue, knowing that when he had finished he would go out and take his own life?"

"There was nothing else for me to do."

"Now, if you please, tell me what he told you."

"He began by telling the history of your troubles with Maoki. Of course I knew it all already, but I had to permit him to tell his tale in his own way. It was his justification."

"Well?"

"It began with your meeting with Maoki at the house of Talika, when you first came to Japan."

"Yes."

"This man was one of the guard who accompanied Maoki that night; and again at another time when your life was attempted in the street. You remember?"

"Yes."

"He recited the entire story without a break, from the time when you impersonated Maoki and attended that secret meeting until, accompanied by Tom Harnett, you crossed the Bay of Tokyo and rescued Talika from one of Maoki's palaces, after she had been laden with precious stones and jewels and bound with a golden chain."

"Well?"

"He told of the flight from the palace, and finally of the capture of Maoki; all of which I was familiar with, you know."

"Yes."

"And then he came down to the real story he had come there to tell me."

"And it was—what?"

"Maoki, after his capture, was taken to the fort, where he was confined as a general of his standing in the army would be. Although Maoki's life was forfeited, although he had committed a dastardly deed, he was not regarded nor treated as a criminal. He was no sooner put in his prison at the fort than he sent for three of his men, of whom my informant was one."

"And directed them to kill me, I suppose; is that the idea?"

"Yes; in part. But Maoki had already perfected his plans. He had only orders to give, and he knew that they would be obeyed, even though he should himself be executed within the hour after he had given them. Indeed, all the more would they be carried out after he was dead."

"I see," said the detective musingly. "I understand."

CHAPTER IV.

BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR.

"Now, Mr. Carter," continued the general, "I must inform you that when a man like Maoki determines upon vengeance—upon a vengeance that shall live after him, if I may use the expression—he invariably orders three of his men to come to him, as Maoki did in this particular case."

"Yes."

"When they make their appearance, they are at first received together, and then, while they are all there in the presence of their master, the general purport of the summons is explained to them."

"For instance, in this case, the three men, when they appeared, were told that the object of the summons was vengeance against me; eh?"

"Precisely. The three were received together. They were told, as soon as they appeared, that they had been brought there to avenge him."

The detective nodded comprehendingly.

"Maoki began by relating the story from beginning to end, just as we already know it; in about the same language that the Samauri afterward used in relating it to me. We may suppose, however, that he represented himself as the wronged one from beginning to end."

"Oh, that goes without saying, general."

"When he had finished, when he had told the story as he wished to have those three men understand it, he closed by saying words to this effect:

"'And now I call upon you three to take vengeance for me; to deliver to me, although I will be dead, that which is my due. Will you avenge me?'

"After that each man swore by his sword to do as directed; and then two of them were sent out of the room while Maoki gave his orders to the one who remained."

"Ah; then they were instructed separately?"

"It is always so in a case of this kind. It is intended to guard against precisely what has happened in this case—against the possibility of betrayal by one of them."

"I see."

"More, after the conference is over each man has his own secret, shared by nobody save the master who imparted it to him; and they are sworn not to discuss the matter in any form between themselves."

"They are not, therefore, really fellow conspirators at all."

"No; each acts independently of the others. Each has his own so-called duty to perform, and they are prohibited from exchanging confidences."

"It is rather interesting—and rather complete, too, in its way, general."

"Yes."

"What came next?"

"For the rest I can only tell you so much of the plot and plans as were told to the man who revealed them to me. I can tell you all that he knew, but nothing whatever of what was said to the other two Samauri."

"I undersand."

"It happened that he was the last who was called into the presence of his chief. The two others had taken their departure, one by one, after receiving their instructions. Then—we will give him a name merely as a matter of expediency, although it is not his own name; we will refer to him as Logi—then Logi was called into the room."

The detective nodded.

"I will quote what he said, as nearly as I can, as it was quoted to me by Logi."

"Yes; that will be better."

"'Logi,' Maoki said to him as soon as they were alone together, 'your task begins where those of the others end. I have perhaps given you the easiest part of the work, since it is not likely that you will be called upon to act. The vengeance will probably be accomplished before your turn comes.'"

"Cheerful prospect," said the detective, smiling.

"'You will keep this man Carter forever under surveillance,' continued Maoki. 'When he sails for his own country, if sail he does, you will go with him on the same ship, but you will not raise your hand against him or do aught to harm him until after he has arrived in the city of his own home—New York, in the United States of America.

"'If it happens that he arrives there safely, which he is not likely to do, then your part of the work will begin. You are to enlist under you whosoever may be found to render you assistance. You will take this order that I give you to my heirs, and you will draw from them such money as you need; and you will arrange to procure more whenever it is necessary.

"'I cannot lay out plans for you, as I have done for the others, for the reason that your work will begin in America, and I have never been there.

"'And so I give you open orders. The direct order consists of three words: *Kill Nicholas Carter!* If the man arrives alive in the city of New York, you are to kill him, or see to it that he is put to death. I do not care how, or when, or where, save that it should be done as soon as possible in order to save expenses. If I knew New York I could be more explicit; but I do not. You are the most intelligent of the three, and therefore I place upon you the onus of this affair only when the others have failed. But they will be with you and near you, and you can call upon them at any and all times.'"

"How is that?" asked the detective. "I thought the men were not to work together."

"Not at the start; that is true. But if the time allotted to the first one expires without the accomplishment of the act, the second one takes his place; and then the second one has the right to command the first to assist him, and also to demand that he tell the second one what his original orders were, and explain why he has failed."

"So, if number one fails, there are presently two on a fellow's track, eh? And if numbers one and two both fail, then there are three on the trail. Is that the idea?"

"Partly; but not entirely."

"How so?"

"Because each of the three men would have engaged several assistants. The whole number pursuing you now—and doubtless at present aboard this ship—may be anywhere from half a dozen to fifteen men."

"That's pleasant. But, anyhow, there are only two of the leaders after me now, eh? One of them took his own life in order to betray the scheme, and so——"

"And so the other two, knowing that he is dead, and no doubt guessing why he killed himself, have sworn in a new man as third—a new man who was only too glad to accept the assignment. You are not in less danger because of the death of Logi; rather are you in greater danger than ever, because, realizing the act of Logi, the others—and particularly the man who has been taken on in his place—will exert themselves all the more to carry out the wishes of their chief."

"I see."

"The only advantage you gain is in that you are made aware of the plot against you."

"Well, this ship is rather a small place. It seems to me that we ought to be able to spot my enemies before we reach the other side."

"We can try; but I am afraid it will be impossible."

"How many of your countrymen are aboard the vessel? Have you any idea?"

"Among the passengers, about thirty; but if we count the servants who are here——"

"Must we count them, also?"

"Certainly."

"Then we won't try. There must be two hundred, all told, on the ship."

"And in the steerage? Have you forgotten that?"

"Oh, well, then, five hundred."

"Easily; and more. So you see how impossible it is for us to determine anything while we are at sea—

unless, indeed, some direct attempt is made against you on the way over."

"Do you think that likely?"

"I think it more than likely."

"Humph! Now tell me how the emperor got wind of this affair. Did you go to him with the story that was told to you by Logi?"

"Directly. As soon as I heard it."

"And he ordered you to take this trip with me?"

"Yes. Instantly."

"It was good of him; very. But how did he suppose you were to prevent the crime, if the avengers attempted it on the way over?"

"My dear Mr. Carter, you do not suppose, do you, that Harnett and I are alone in this matter, by order of the emperor?"

"Eh? What do you mean by that?"

"I have ten men scattered about the ship whom the emperor ordered me to take with me."

"Ten men? Ten what? Spies, working in my interests?"

"Exactly that."

Nick leaned back in his chair, and, sticking his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, stared for a moment at the general. Then he took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it; and then he exclaimed:

"Well, general, I knew that the emperor liked me; I was aware that he regarded me rather as a friend, but I'll be hanged if I supposed he would do such a thing as this for me, for all that. He is, in fact, paying the expenses of twelve men—I suppose out of his private purse at that—to watch over me and see that I don't get hurt. General, it is a new experience for Nick Carter, if anybody should walk across the waves and ask you!"

"Well, now, Mr. Carter, you know as much of the conditions by which you are surrounded as I know myself."

"I feel rather like a boy who has just been let out of school, and who is told not to whittle lest he cut his finger. I do, indeed. General, do you really suppose that those three Samauri are on this boat?"

"It is possible; but it is not likely. They would not put all their eggs in one basket."

"Where are they, then?"

"Doubtless one of them is here; possibly two of them. On the other hand, it is likely two would have gone by another route. It is impossible to say."

"Well, then, supposing that one of them is here—with several assistants, as you intimated a little while ago?"

"Yes?"

"What sort of attack do you suppose will be made upon me—a knife, or a pistol, or poison, or a shove over the rail into the sea?"

"Possibly the first or third; hardly the second. As for the last, that would not be undertaken unless you so far forgot yourself as to stand alone near the rail of the vessel, after dark, and so invited the casualty. But there are other things more to be dreaded than any that you have mentioned, Mr. Carter."

"Yes? What are they?"

"Accidents."

"Accidents!"

"Apparent accidents, I mean. The sort of casualty that can be explained on the theory of accident."

"Upon my word, general, this is getting to be quite interesting. Do you know what I think I will do? I'll tell you. I think I will give you a correct imitation of a gentleman becoming his own client. I think I will take Nick Carter's case in hand and see what I can do with it. I can serve others fairly well. I'll see what I can do for myself."

CHAPTER V.

THE POLICEMAN FROM TOKIO.

Notwithstanding the detective's assertion that he meant to become his own client, he permitted that day and the following one to pass without doing anything—at least, anything that his companions were aware of—to carry out the idea; and in the meantime nothing at all occurred to suggest that enemies were near him.

He was conscious, however, of the unceasing vigilance of the general, and of Harnett, as well, and somehow it annoyed him.

He was not accustomed to being watched over as if he were incapable of taking care of himself. He felt somehow out of his sphere.

Several times, also, he had the indefinable feeling that other eyes were upon him, studying him, watching him; but whether they were the eyes of the enemy or of one or more of the ten men who had been sent by the emperor to help guard him he could not determine.

Nor could he discover them, although he sought, by every expedient known to his long practise, to do so.

By the close of the second day it had become unbearable from his standpoint, and when he went to his stateroom that night he had determined in his own mind that he would do something at once, to escape from it all.

He entered the room and turned on the light, after which he turned to close and fasten the door; but as he did so he discovered that one of the Japanese stewards was bowing to him from the open doorway.

"Hello!" said the detective. "What's the matter now?"

"Your berth, sir," replied the steward, in perfect English; and he attempted to pass the detective and enter the room.

"Well, what about it?" asked Nick, barring his way resolutely. "It seems to be all right, doesn't it?"

"Ah, sir, if you will permit me to examine it, I will tell you. I did not know that you were coming down so early or I would have attended to it sooner."

"But what is there to do with it?"

"If you will let me pass, sir——"

"I'll let you pass when you have told me why you wish to pass; not before."

"I have orders, sir, to examine your bed each night, the last thing before you get into it," was the reply, this time spoken in the Japanese language.

"Orders from whom?" asked Nick, in the same tongue.

"From his august and imperial majesty, the emperor, sir."

"Indeed; well, go ahead and examine it, and let's see what you find."

He stepped aside, thus permitting the man to enter. Then he watched him as he turned back the covers.

Presently the man uttered a sibilant exclamation, and Nick stepped forward quickly and peered over his shoulder, discovering, as he did so, an acorn-shaped article that had been uncovered where it lay between the sheets.

It was in reality a sort of steel burr, with fully a score of fine needle-points sticking out from it on every side.

The thing looked almost alive as it rested there, glistening in the electric light; it was somewhat menacing, too, and Nick shrugged his shoulders, laughing.

"What is it?" he asked the steward, noticing that the man was staring at it as if fascinated, and that he made no attempt to touch it.

Either the man did not hear, or he did not heed, for he continued to stare at the steel burr; and Nick, stepping quickly around him, reached out his hand as if to take it.

But the steward seized him quickly, and with a degree of strength that surprised the detective, jerked him backward and away from reaching-distance of the burr, at the same time exclaiming sharply in Japanese:

"Don't touch it! Not for your life!"

"Eh? Why not?" asked Nick.

"It is death to touch that. Even the tiniest prick from one of those needles would mean death."

The detective uttered a low whistle.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the detective. "Who do you suppose put it there?"

The Jap shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it was intended that I should get into bed and then roll up against that burr, eh?" asked the detective.

"Yes," replied the steward.

"And were you expecting to find some such thing as that in here? Is that why you came to examine my bed before I retired?"

"I came because to do so is part of my orders. It was not that I expected to find anything, but that it was my business to be assured that nothing was there."

"And you found this. What do you propose to do with it, now that you have found it?"

"Throw it overboard. It has been dipped in a deadly poison. The only safe place for it is at the bottom of the sea."

"How do you know that?"

"I have seen such implements before, sir; and I have seen their deadly work."

"You are not really a steward, are you?"

"No, sir."

"Who and what are you?"

"I am acting as one of the stewards, by express permission of the captain. In reality I am a member of the government police, at Tokio."

"Ah! There are nine others of your kind about this vessel, aren't there?"

"There are others, sir; I do not know how many."

"And you are all sent here to watch over my welfare, eh?"

"Yes, sir; although we were not to apprise you of the fact. But I suppose the general has already told you."

"What are the others? Stewards, like yourself?"

"Stewards, passengers—everything, sir."

"Well, go and chuck that steel burr overboard, and then return here. I want to talk to you a little."

Nick watched the man while he threw a towel over the burr and so succeeded in picking it up without harm to himself. When he returned Nick asked him:

"Now, what do your duties comprehend? What are you supposed to do, in watching over me?"

"I have only just come on duty, sir. It is my place to remain close to you while you are on the deck, to examine your room before you enter it, when you wish to retire—you see, I was a little late about that to-night—and to stand guard at your door from the moment you enter your room until you come out of it again."

"And what are the other nine doing all this time?" asked Nick.

"I can reply only concerning four of them."

"Well, what do they do?"

"We each have six hours personal watch over you, and six hours general watch; then twelve hours off, for rest."

"And when I am outside on the decks—what then?"

"There are always two of us near you, watching."

"You don't mean that I shall get hurt if you can help it, do you?"

"No, sir," was the straightforward reply, made so simply that Nick laughed aloud.

"How would it do for me to change my berth?" he asked. "Suppose I crawled into the upper one for a change; eh?"

"I don't know, sir. We will examine and see."

The man climbed up and pulled the covers away from the upper berth, and then he uttered that same sibilant exclamation of discovery.

"There are two of the deadly burrs in this berth, sir," he said, reaching for another towel.

"Hold on a minute," said the detective, stopping him. "At this rate the steamship company won't have any towels left; and, besides, I want to preserve those burrs. Wait; I will put them in a little box I've got in my bag. There. That will do the trick. I will keep these as souvenirs of the voyage. Now, my friend, you say that you are a member of the government police; eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"As such, have you any idea of the identity of any of these people who are trying to murder me?"

"No, sir. I suspect one person, but it is only suspicion."

"Who is that one person? I would like to know. I'd like to do a little watching myself. Possibly somebody may have told you that I am a sort of detective myself, in my own country; eh?"

"Ah, sir, I know that no one is greater than you are, in your profession."

"Oh, do you? I had begun to think that I had gone out of business entirely. Seems as if things were rather taken out of my hands—but I'll have to admit that it would never have occurred to me to look inside my bed for a poisoned steel burr. Now, who is the party you suspect?"

"A passenger."

"What sort of a passenger, and where is he roomed?"

"It isn't a he, sir; it is a she."

"A *she!* Well, well. Who and what is she?"

"A Japanese woman, sir; traveling with her servants."

"But Japanese women don't travel alone, do they? I mean, without male escort?"

"A geisha may do so."

"A geisha! What geisha? Not Talika?"

"Yes."

"Great goodness, man! Is Talika aboard this ship?"

"She is."

"And you—you don't mean to tell me that you suspect *her?*"

"I do, sir."

"Well, I'll tell you right now that you are away off. Talika is my friend. If she is here it is to do what you are trying to do, to watch over me, not to injure me. How is it that I have not seen her since the ship sailed, if she is aboard the vessel?"

"She has kept to her room; she has not left it once since the ship left port."

"And she has servants with her, you say? How many?"

"Three. One of them occupies the room with her; the others are in the room adjoining. One is a woman; the others are boys."

The detective looked at his watch and discovered that it was still quite early in the evening; not time for the passengers to have retired. He snapped the cases together and demanded:

"Where is the room occupied by Talika, the geisha?"

"Directly opposite this one, sir, on the starboard side."

"Well, I am going there right now. You can tag along or not, just as you please. And after that I

will have something to say to you. Tell me what your name is."

"Hanshu."

"Well, Hanshu, I want to see you after my interview with Talika. Understand?"

The man bowed low, and the detective went out to make his call.

CHAPTER VI.

A MURDEROUS ATTACK IN A HURRICANE.

In response to a gentle tapping against the door, it was opened a few inches and a pair of soft Japanese eyes gazed out upon the detective inquiringly.

"I wish to speak with your mistress," said Nick, in the Japanese language. "Be good enough to tell her that it is Mr. Carter."

Instantly the door was thrown open and he was told to enter, and as he passed inside he discovered Talika reclining upon the couch, although she sprang up the instant he appeared and bowed humbly before him, with her hands clasped together, and her entire demeanor one of worshipful regard.

"Talika?" he said; and he took both of her hands and held them for a moment. "What folly is this, child, that brought you here aboard this vessel, when you should be in Tokio in the palace of the emperor?" He spoke in English, and she replied to him in the same tongue.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I could not stay there when you were in danger, and I believed that if I were here, near you, I could do more to save you than all the police put together."

Nick motioned to her to resume her seat upon the couch, and then he drew a folding chair forward and seated himself beside her.

"How did you know that danger threatened me?" he asked.

"I overheard General Lakatira, when he told it all to the emperor. But I would have known about it anyway. My heart would have told me, even if I had not understood Maoki well enough to know that he would never go to his death without first making arrangements for vengeance. A man with so many of the Samauri faithful and loyal to him would never consent to die like he must die without making arrangements for vengeance. I would have known."

"But you, child, what can you do? You should have remained in Tokio."

"No; my place is here."

"Do you know any of these people?"

"No."

"They seem to be mighty mysterious."

"Not mysterious, but merely unknown. The man who killed himself—I would have known him, because he had been with his master to my house; but the others, ah! they have come from the country estates of Maoki, and nobody in the city knows them."

"Have you no suspicions concerning them?"

"Only one; but that is only a suspicion."

"Tell me about that one."

"Ah, it is a man who is now allied to the government police, but I know that General Maoki secured the place for him: that the man was once a member of Maoki's following. He is called Hanshu."

"That's funny," said the detective.

"What is funny?" she asked.

"That you should each charge the other with being my enemy. It was he who told me of your presence aboard this ship and who directed me to this room. But he first tried to make me believe that you were here as my enemy."

"Yes. He would do that," she replied simply. Then she looked up into the detective's face quickly, and added: "It would be like him also to do something that would tend to convince you of his own loyalty to you, perhaps. Tell me, did he not do something of that kind?"

"Well," replied Nick, smiling, "he certainly found a steel burr, shaped like an acorn and bristling with needle-points which he said were poisoned, in my bed, and two more in the upper berth."

Talika shrugged her shoulders, but she did not smile this time.

"Listen," she said, "if the man were sincere in his desire to serve you, and also those who sent him here, he would have found those burrs and have thrown them into the sea before you went to your room—and he would have said nothing at all about them. But from what you tell me it appears that he timed himself so that he would arrive at your room when you did, so that he could discover them in your presence. By that means he hoped to gain your confidence, and having done that he will wait for an opportunity to carry out what he considers to be his duty—that is, he will strike. Ah, Mr. Carter, trust to the loyalty of Talika, and beware of that man."

"But, child, he is a member of the government police."

"True; but before that he was in the service of

Maoki. That is where he considers that his loyalty belongs. He is a Samauri. His fathers before him were in the service of the fathers of Maoki. Even though he were sent here by the emperor himself, if previous to that he received orders from Maoki, it would be Maoki whom he would obey, and not the emperor."

Nick smiled broadly.

"I begin to think," he said, "that the entire ship's company is divided into two parts. One-half seems to desire the death of Nick Carter, and the other half is here to save him; eh? I seem suddenly to have attained considerable importance in the world."

"There is one thing, however, which we must take into consideration," she said, not heeding Nick's last remark.

"What is that?" he asked.

"This: If the man Hanshu did not receive direct orders from Maoki, he will obey the orders of the emperor. If he did not receive direct orders from his old master, his honor will hold him loyal to the trust that has been imposed in him. So it may be that my suspicions are unfounded. You must watch."

The detective rose to take his departure, but when his hand was upon the door, Talika addressed him again.

"Honorable Mister Carter," she said humbly, and he turned smilingly toward her, "you will forgive poor little Talika for following you across the ocean, will you not?"

"Nevertheless, Talika," he replied, "it is greatly to be regretted that you came. It puts you in the wrong light, and me also. You must return on this same ship, child."

"No," she replied obstinately. "If they do not kill you before we reach——"

"Well, I'll tell you right now they won't do that."

"Then I shall remain near you, in America. If you die, I shall die also."

It was said with a quiet expression of finality that Nick knew to be entirely sincere; but he chose to disregard the latter part of her utterance. He said:

"You must not remain in America. You must return at once to Japan and to the palace."

"No," she said again. "I cannot do that now. It is too late. Everybody knows by this time that I have followed you. I cannot go back. I will stay in America. I will be your servant."

"But Talika, child, that is impossible. We do not do things in my country as they do in yours."

"I will not trouble you; I will only serve you."

Nick realized in that moment that there was only one way to overcome her obstinacy, and now he stepped nearer to her and took her hands again.

"Talika," he said, "do you really desire to serve me? To do as I wish you to do?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then you will not leave this vessel when it arrives on the other coast. I will make arrangements with the captain and chief steward so that you can remain aboard until the ship steams away again, and you will return with it to Japan, and you will carry with you a letter which I shall ask you to deliver into the hands of the emperor. Will you obey me?"

There were tears in her eyes, but she smiled through them.

"Yes," she replied.

"Good night, then. To-morrow I will talk with you again."

Talika's servant opened the door for him, and he passed outside, for this room, like his own, opened upon the deck.

There had been a decided change in the weather during the short time he had remained in Talika's room.

The moon had been shining and there were many stars visible when he entered there; now the heavens were obscured, heavy clouds hung above the ship so closely that they seemed almost to touch it, the darkness of the night was like a black wall through which no vision was possible, and over it all was an ominous hush such as is only experienced in that part of the world.

For a moment he paused near the doorway through which he had just passed.

The deck was deserted. Chairs had been taken inside by the stewards. Although Nick was unable to see anything at all save where lights shone through the upper saloon windows, he was conscious of the fact that everything movable had been hastily housed, and that preparations had been made for one of those sudden and terrible storms that are frequently experienced near the coast of Japan.

Even while he stood there, wondering at the great change that had taken place during the few moments he had been with Talika, he could hear in the distance the rushing sound of the coming tempest monster.

An instant after he had become conscious of it, the sound had increased to a roar, and then, just as he started forward to gain the entrance to the main cabin, the hurricane struck the ship.

The weight of it was like a giant hand pressing against the vessel and gradually forcing it over on its side until the huge mass of steal and iron was almost on her beam-ends, and seemed to be held there in suspense, helpless and impotent.

At the instant the gale struck him, Nick's hand was grasping an iron stay that passed just above his head, and he clung to it with all his strength while his body was flung out straight away from it, like a flag flying at a mast.

And so he hung for several minutes while it seemed as if his arms would be pulled from their sockets or that his grasp upon the stay would be torn away despite his great strength.

Presently, however, there came a lull; one of these cessations in a hurricane during which the wind seems to hold back for the sole purpose of gathering additional energy for a second onslaught.

It was sufficient, however, to enable him to get his feet again upon the deck, to take his bearings, to locate the door through which he wished to pass to gain the interior of the vessel; and then he released his hold upon the iron stay, and with head down he rushed forward with an inward prayer that he might reach that door before the giant fingers of the hurricane could seize upon him again.

So he started for the main cabin door; started on a run; but even as he did so, the second swoop of the hurricane struck the vessel.

The first one had been furious; this one was terrific.

Have you ever seen a feather in the grasp of a sudden squall of wind? It was so with the detective.

He was seized as if with hands; he was whirled round and round as if he were on a pivot, only all the time he was carried along the deck, his feet scarcely touching it at all.

Then he collided with something that was soft and yielding, and he seized upon it just as they were being carried past one of the upper saloon windows, and Nick caught one glimpse of the man he had seized, discovering in that instant that it was Hanshu, the policeman.

There was a murderous-looking knife in Hanshu's hand, and even in the storm it was raised to strike; but as the wind carried them both along the deck, Nick grasped the fellow's wrist and held it; and then as he did that they were both hurled against the starboard rail, where for an instant they clung.

And then, together, they toppled over and disappeared in the blackness beneath them.

CHAPTER VII.

TERRORS OF THE TEMPEST.

It was a strange and curious freak of the gale that spared Nick Carter's life in that critical moment.

The second rush of the mighty wind came from a different quarter from the first one, and it was much more terrific in force.

It tore away everything that was movable from the decks of the ship, and many things that had been lashed with supposable security.

On the upper deck three of the boats were wrenched from the davits, smashed, and carried away, while the davits themselves were twisted into ludicrous shapes, as if they were made of moist spaghetti instead of wrought-iron as large as a man's biceps. One of these boats was located almost directly over the spot where Nick Carter and the man Hanshu were thrown against the starboard rail.

This boat was not entirely carried away; that is, the rope that held it to the davit at the bow became jammed in the block, and with the result that the boat itself struck the water, bounded into the air, righted, and then, as the rope held, it was dragged along beside the ship in an almost vertical position with just the after end of the keel bounding from wave to wave.

Again, that side of the vessel was opposite the force of the wind—it was at the moment the lee side—and the ship itself was lying far over, so that the rail over which the detective and the Jap were hurled was but a comparatively few feet above the water.

When they fell into the black void they were instantly in comparative calm, and the force of the hurricane was so terrible that the waves were beaten down until the sea was almost smooth—and they fell directly into the small boat that has already been described.

For an instant the detective was stunned by the force of the fall, but he had fortunately alighted on top of the other man, and he was, therefore, not seriously injured.

He could hear the rushing of the gale over his head, and in a moment more he understood where he was and what had saved him. It seemed almost as if a special Providence had torn that boat loose and placed it there purposely to catch him when he fell.

He reached out one hand and touched Hanshu; then he shook him and spoke to him, forgetting for the moment that the man had tried to murder him.

But there was no answer, and he tried again, with the same result.

Nick could not see anything at all, but he could feel, and, placing his hand against Hanshu's heart, he discovered that it was still; there was no pulsation there. Nick lifted him a little from where he laid, and the head fell backward till it was at right angles with the body, and then it was that the detective realized that the man's neck had been broken, and he was dead.

For a moment he stared into the darkness and thought deeply, for he was still rather dazed and uncertain; and then of a sudden he realized that his own life was hanging by a mere thread, and that any instant the rope that still held them to the vessel might part.

Energy returned to him with the thought, and, dropping the body of the dead man, he struggled forward over the thwarts, climbing through the boat at an angle of twenty-three degrees toward the bow, where the hook of the falls was straining at the bight.

It was a perilous thing to undertake, to go up hand over hand along that rope to the deck of the ship, but there was no other way, and he realized now more than ever that at any instant it might work loose where it was jammed in the block, and then——

He threw off his coat and vest and cast them away from him, to make less weight; and then he began the ascent.

Why attempt to describe that greatest effort of all his life—that struggle for life, with the roar of the tempest in his ears and the impenetrable darkness blanketing his eyes? He could never remember much of those moments, himself.

He only knew that it seemed to him years afterward when at last he raised his body over the railing and fell upon the deck, lying there for a moment, scarcely conscious. Something there was that shielded him from the force of the wind, otherwise he would have been blown away again into the sea, and lost.

Finally he struggled to his knees and wound one arm around something which proved later to be one of the twisted davits. Then he tried to peer through the darkness toward the boat he had left, but he could see nothing.

He reached out through the blackness to touch the rope up which he had fought his way, but he touched nothing at all.

"It should be there," he thought; and he struggled to his feet, still clinging to the davit.

Then he reached out again, and this time he caught a single strand of rope, dangling loosely. He realized then what had happened. The boat was gone, and with it the corpse of the man who had sought to murder him.

Somehow, after that, he managed to reach his own stateroom; he never knew quite how he did it, save that he crawled on his belly, clinging to whatsoever he could reach, and struggling mightily; and when at last he closed the door of his own room behind him he threw himself upon the couch and lay there for a long time only half-conscious.

But gradually his brain cleared.

His thoughts came consecutively. He remembered that Talika had warned him against that very man who had attempted his life only to lose his own so strangely; he remembered that there were many others on the ship who were there to kill him if it could be done; he realized that this particular man had waited outside Talika's room to strike when the detective should appear, and that the would-be murderer had sought to take advantage of the storm to carry out his purpose.

Suddenly he started to his feet, thoroughly himself again; thoroughly resolved upon the course he would now pursue.

He tore open both the satchels that were in the room and spread their contents upon the berth, and presently, having selected what he wanted, he began to divest himself of the wet clothing he was wearing.

These he rolled into a bundle and tied a string around them for security; and then he began to dress himself again, and he did it with exceeding care, giving every attention to making the disguise he was creating, as complete as possible.

By the time he had finished, he heard eight bells strike, down in the engine-room, and he knew that it was four o'clock in the morning.

He looked at himself in the glass, and smiled grimly under the stain and the false whiskers that appeared to grow rather sparsely on his chin. They, as well as the tight-fitting wig that he had pulled over his own hair, were gray.

He had managed somehow to impart a decided slant to his eyes and had blocked out two teeth. Shaggy brows of gray overshadowed his eyes; aluminum pads inside his cheeks altered the entire expression of his face and mouth, and he looked exactly what he had sought to make himself appear—a Japanese past middle age who seemed to belong to the merchant class of Yokusuka, or some other seaport town.

Satisfied with his appearance, he restored his things to the satchels, placing them in order so they would

not seem to have been disturbed, replaced the satchels where they had been before the storm, extinguished the lights, and opened the door and peared out.

The storm had passed almost. Only the aftermath of it was left.

There was still half a gale of wind blowing, but it was as nothing compared to what had been.

Returning, he seized the bundle he had tied with a string, and, stepping to the rail, he cast it into the sea; then, placing such articles in his pockets as he thought he might need later on, and assuring himself that his money was safe, he passed out of the room, closed the door, and made his way slowly along the deck to the smoking-room, where he entered and huddled himself in a corner of it.

Here, thoroughly exhausted by what he had passed through, he presently fell asleep, and it was five bells —half-past six—when he awoke; awoke, to discover that the captain was standing in front of him, staring down upon him.

Nick glanced around him quickly, and discovered that they were alone in the smoking-room; and then the captain addressed him sharply in Japanese.

"Who might you be, and what are you sleeping here for, instead of where you belong?" he demanded, with suspicion in his tones.

Again, with a hasty glance around him to assure himself that there were no listeners, Nick replied, and in English:

"Captain, I was only waiting here until I could have an opportunity to speak with you alone. Will you take me to the chart-room, where we are sure of not being interrupted? I am one of your first-cabin passengers. I am Nick Carter."

"The devil you are! What are you doing here? And why that rig—if you are telling me the truth?"

Nick got upon his feet.

"Take me to the chart-room, captain, if you please," he said. "It is a matter of very great importance."

For a moment the captain hesitated. It was plain that he was suspicious; plain that he did not yet believe the statement; but after a moment he turned on his heel and said, gruffly:

"Come, then. But if you don't make good, it will be a pair of iron bracelets for yours for the remainder of the voyage."

The captain was hollow-eyed and worn with fatigue. He had borne the whole brunt of the storm with all its accompanying responsibilities.

But he led the way to the chart-room, and, having closed and locked the door against intrusion, threw himself into a chair, not deeming it necessary to ask Nick to take another one.

"Now, my Japanese friend," he said, with ironical smoothness, "make good or take the consequences. When I discovered you I rated you as a stowaway. I still think so. It's up to you, since you speak English so well. But don't give me that Carter gag any more. I happen to have a sort of personal acquaintance with that gentleman."

Nick laughed aloud.

"I am Nick Carter, all the same, captain," he said. "I'll convince you of it in a moment, but for goodness' sake give me a cigar, will you? I hung over the side of the ship for almost an hour during the worst part of the storm, and but for the fact that I was caught and held there by your number eight boat before it tore entirely loose, I wouldn't be here to tell you the story. Don't you recognize my voice, captain?"

"I'm beginning to." The captain grinned. "Go on," he added. "Let's hear the yarn."

"How about that cigar?"

"Help yourself. There's a box of them in the lower drawer of that desk. Pull up a chair, and then tell me what in thunder all this masquerading means."

And Nick told him, telling the last part of the story first, for he began with the coming of the storm and the attack made upon him by Hanshu.

Then he took the captain back to Tokio and related his experiences there, with the consequent results, and closed by giving a detailed account of the plot against him, as revealed by Lakatira and Talika.

"So you understand," he concluded, "why I thought it good policy to disappear utterly. I was coming to you to ask you to go to the chief steward and the purser for me, and to arrange so that I can have another room under another name, for the remainder of the voyage. You can arrange it easily, if you will do so."

"Do so? Of course I'll do it. But, by thunder! Carter, I want you to spot those murderers for me before we make port," was the emphatic reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK CARTER REPORTED DEAD.

At noon that day, when the ship's run was posted on the bulletin, there was an announcement tacked up

beside it to the effect that two passengers had disappeared during the storm, and it was feared that they had been swept overboard, and the names of Nicholas Carter, of New York, and of Hanshu, of Tokio, were given.

Nick was busily engaged in reading that announcement himself when two Japanese approached behind him and stood for a moment gazing at it; and the detective saw that one of them cast a furtive glance toward the other, while he remarked in a low tone:

"I wonder if they went overboard together?"

"More than likely," was the reply; and the two moved away, but not without Nick's taking a mental photograph of each one. They had spoken in Japanese, but Nick had understood.

"There go two of my would-have-been assassins," he thought, smiling.

He was recalled to the business of the moment by the approach of General Lakatira and Tom Harnett, who came up together and paused in front of the bulletin. It was evident that neither had heard the news.

Harnett stopped suddenly and seized his companion by one arm.

"Look, general!" he exclaimed. "Great heaven, isn't it awful?"

The general was staring at the announcement, speechless. Presently he spoke, and with a strange calmness, under the circumstances.

"It was murder," he said, in a low tone. "I distrusted Hanshu. He used to serve under Maoki. He has found his opportunity during the storm, but he lost his own life also."

"What of that? What is his life, to the life of your friend?"

"Nothing, Tom; nothing."

"What shall you do now, general?"

"What can I do? There is nothing to do, my son. I have failed; that is all. I shall return to Japan on this same ship, make my report to the emperor, and then——" The pause was significant.

"Will that be necessary, my father?" asked Harnett, pale now; for he loved the old general.

"Necessary, my son? It is imperative. The mikado gave me a duty to perform. I have failed. The man I should have guarded with my own life is dead." He shrugged his shoulders and turned out his palms almost as if he were a Frenchman.

"But you will do nothing till your return to Tokio, general?" asked Harnett entreatingly.

"No. Not till I have reported my failure."

He was turning away, when he stopped suddenly.

"My son," he said, "do you suppose that the truth about this can be kept from Talika? She must not know, if it is possible to keep the knowledge from her."

"No; she must not know."

"But I fear that the information will get to her. Some one will tell her; one of her own servants, perhaps, unless—unless I can see them and make them promise not to tell her."

"Yes. You had better do that."

"And we must watch *her* now, Tom; watch her closely."

"Yes. Yes, we will."

"If she hears this—if the knowledge gets to her, she will follow him into the sea, Tom."

"Yes. I know that, general."

"And it must not happen. The emperor will say that I should at least have prevented that from happening."

"Would it not be best to go to her yourself and tell her all about it? She would promise you, perhaps, not to——"

"She would not promise."

"She might."

"Tom, you are a Japanese by birth and education, but not by blood. Don't you realize that when Talika knows that our friend is over there on the other side, she will go to him on the instant? And with all the joy in her heart that she would feel if she were going to her own wedding-feast? Do you suppose, Tom, that she would *sorrow,* if she were told of this?"

"Why, yes, I——"

"She would rejoice, Tom. While he lived, she would have sacrificed every drop of her blood to save him; but now that he has gone—don't you understand, Tom?—she can go to him?"

They moved away together, and Nick stood for quite a time where he was, very thoughtful indeed.

Here were complications that he had not considered.

Here was a general of the Japanese army, a man who had won renown on the field of battle, who had already calmly announced that he should take his own life as soon as he had made his report to his emperor.

And up above, in one of the deck-cabins, was a young woman, scarcely out of her teens, who would calmly walk into the sea and so end her young life the moment she was informed of the news that had been posted on the bulletin-board.

He had not counted upon any such consequences

when he decided to disappear. He had not even considered the suffering he was to bring upon his friends.

In truth, he had not thought about that phase of it at all; there had been too many other things to consider; but now——

He heard a quick gasp, a sudden indrawing of breath close beside him, and turned.

Talika stood there, gazing wide-eyed upon the announcement. Her hands were clasped together, and she stood so still that she seemed scarcely to breathe.

Nick watched her narrowly, and gradually he saw the horror die out of her eyes, and in its place there came an expression of calm resolve which almost transfigured her. There are people who insist that the Japanese face is almost expressionless, but at all events it was not true of Talika.

Nick Carter, watching her, could read each changing thought that teemed through her brain.

The shock caused by his supposed death had at first, and for a moment, paralyzed her, for, like the general, she had realized in that instant that they had failed in their mission, which was to save him; then had come the gradual realization that if he was indeed lost to the world, he had gone where she could follow and find him, according to her belief.

Others came and stood behind them for a moment or two while they read the announcement, and then turned away again; but Talika remained like a statue, lost to all sense of her surroundings.

She was thinking of the terrible storm and of what had happened while it lasted; she was wishing that she could have been with the "honorable Mister Carter" when he was carried away, as the bulletin announced.

After a little she moved away slowly, and Nick followed her, keeping within arm's length of her so that he could reach out and grasp her at any instant.

But she went directly to her cabin on the deck, and he followed her.

He understood now why she had left it at all.

At first she had remained in seclusion because she did not wish him to know that she was aboard the vessel; but last evening he had called upon her. He knew of her presence, and so there was no longer a reason why she should remain hidden.

When she walked along the deck toward her room Nick kept very close to her. Once she stopped and gazed off across the heaving water, and Nick stepped forward until he stood between her and the rail.

She seemed to notice the act, for she withdrew her eyes for a moment from the distance, and let them rest upon the apparent stranger who almost obstructed her view; but the glance held no recognition in it.

She sighed, and a smile dimpled her cheeks for an instant; then she continued on her way toward her cabin, Nick still following closely.

At the door she paused another instant, then she pushed it open and entered; but before she could close it again Nick followed her into the room and quickly closed the door after him. Fortunately the servant was not there at the moment.

Talika turned quickly to face the intruder, her face aflame with sudden anger; but Nick stretched out both hands toward her, and uttered one word—her name.

"Talika?" he said.

She gasped and drew back, frightened. She recognized the voice, and yet——

"Talika," he said, "it is I. Do not be afraid, child; it is I. The bulletin tells what is not true. I was not swept away by the storm. Hanshu tried to kill me, and lost his own life, while mine was spared—and then I did this, to make those who seek me believe that I perished. It is I, Talika, child; don't you know me now?"

She gazed upon him, all her soul in her eyes, and then without warning she burst into a sudden passion of weeping, throwing herself face down upon her berth, her whole body shaking with the spasms of her sobs.

Was it joy because he still lived, or agonizing sorrow because her dream of joining him across the shadow could not be realized?

Nick asked himself the question, but he could not answer it.

After a little he stepped forward and raised her gently from the berth.

"Why do you weep, Talika?" he asked gently. "Is it because I still live? Are you disappointed because I did not perish in the storm?"

The questions recalled her to herself, and she sat up, wiping her eyes and striving bravely to smile through her tears and sobs; then suddenly she slid to the floor and was upon her knees in front of him, with clasped hands upheld and with a piteous expression of fondness in her eyes, such as a favorite dog will bestow upon its master.

"I do not know you when I look at you," she said. "It is only when I hear your voice. I wish that you would tell Talika how it all happened—please, Mister Carter."

So he told her all of it, from the moment when he

passed out of her door to his interview with the captain in the chart-room; and she listened with never a word of interruption.

Frequently while he talked she nodded her head sagely, in approval of what he had done; and by the time he had finished she had quite recovered herself. She was the same self-reliant Talika again.

"And now," said Nick, in conclusion, "I must go at once and let Harnett and General Lakatira into the secret."

"No," she said quickly. "You must not do that."

"But, child, the general is meditating taking his own life."

She nodded. "Yes," she agreed, "he would surely do that, if you were really dead; but he would not do it until after he has told the emperor all about it. And long before that can be possible you will let him know that you are alive. When we arrive in port you will do that. No, Mister Carter, keep your secret, now that it is established."

"But I cause my friends unnecessary suffering, Talika."

"Ah! But think of the joy that will be theirs when they know the truth. And now, if your secret is discovered, you will have to face again all the dangers that existed before this happened."

"They would not betray me."

"No; not in words, but in manner—yes. And those who are here to seek your life would read the signs, and read them correctly. The Japanese are suspicious, and they will watch."

"Perhaps you are right."

"Keep your secret, Mister Carter."

"Talika," asked Nick, as he was about to leave the room, "what were you meditating when I followed you into this room? Were you——"

"I thought you were there," she answered, pointing vaguely through the window. "I was going there, too, to find you;" and she smiled again—but contentedly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BETRAYAL OF A PLOT.

It was the second night after that when Nick Carter, in going to his stateroom—the one that had been assigned to him in his new character—was arrested while passing a door by the sound of voices conversing in low tones and in the Japanese language.

It was not the sound of the voices, nor the language in which they were conversing, that attracted him, but he heard distinctly the utterance of Lakatira's name, and coupled with it was the name of Harnett.

The hour was late. Nick had been up forward in the chart-room, smoking and chatting with the captain, and it was now past midnight. The sea was as calm as the Pacific Ocean is popularly supposed to be.

After the utterance of those two names, only the faint murmur of the voices came to the detective as he listened, and presently he stepped closer to the door, believing that they came from there.

But as he did so, the sound of the voices died out altogether. The door was open, however, and he peered inside the room, only to discover that it was empty save for one person, who was soundly sleeping in the lower berth.

"Hmm! That's strange," he thought; and he stepped back again to his former position.

Again the voices came to him in a low murmur.

Sometimes that murmur rose till he could distinguish here and there a word, and then it sank away again to a sound so faint that he could scarcely be sure he heard it at all; and yet it did not seem to him that the speakers were raising or lowering their voices.

It was some sort of a trick that the accoustic properties of the vessel, or the action of the breeze, was playing with him.

Several times he altered his position, but each time with the result that he heard nothing at all save when he stood in that one particular spot.

Now and then words of that conversation came to him, but never connectedly.

But he gathered in such words as "Lakatira," "Maoki," "vengeance," "duty to the dead," and he heard his own name several times repeated, so it is not strange that he longed to get nearer and to hear exactly what was being said.

But he could not locate the source of the sounds, do what he might, and at last, with a resigned shrug, he passed on to his own door, which was the second beyond where he stood.

Just beyond this door was a narrow flight of stairs which communicated with the next deck above, and as he was about to pass into his own room it occurred to him that he would ascend to the upper deck for a moment.

He did so, in silence, pausing when only his head and half his body were above the deck; and now again

he plainly heard the murmur of those same voices; he discovered also how it happened that they had reached him while he was still on the lower deck.

Some passenger who desired a great deal of air in his room had caused a windsail to be rigged beside his window; that is, a piece of canvas had been stretched tightly out at right angles with the window, to catch what air there was stirring and deflect it into the room.

The voices came from the room next to the one where the windsail had been rigged, and Nick understood now that the sound of the voices, however low-toned, in floating out at the window, was caught by the air upon the canvas and had been directed downward, so that, standing in a certain position on the deck below, he had been able to hear.

The principle is the same as that which permits the sound of a voice to be heard much farther in the direction in which the wind is blowing than it could be against the wind. There had been no explanation of the phenomenon while he was on the lower deck, but up here it was at once perfectly plain.

Recognizing the fact at once, he crept forward, but instead of approaching the window from which the sounds proceeded, he stationed himself directly beneath the windsail that has already been described.

At once he could plainly hear every word that was uttered in that room, although those who were conversing did so in a tone so low that it is doubtful if he could have distinguished their words if he had been directly beneath their window instead of where he was.

The very first connected utterance that reached his ears was:

"And Talika, the geisha? What of her?"

"Ah," said a voice—they were conversing in Japanese—the voice of one of the two men he had noticed when the announcement of his own death was posted on the bulletin, "Talika puzzles me greatly. Why has she not gone over the rail into the sea, after her lover? For the man Carter was her lover, was he not?"

"Evidently not," answered another voice, "or she would have followed him."

"Perhaps," ventured the first speaker, "Nick Carter is not dead, after all."

"Eh? What do you mean by that?" asked a third.

"Who knows? I have heard that he has as many lives as a cat. We all know that one of the original three who were sent after him went to General Lakatira and confessed all, and then threw himself upon his sword. General Lakatira is here, aboard the ship, and therefore he doubtless told Carter that we were after him; and so—who knows?—he may have used the storm only for a means of disappearing."

"Nogasuka, do you mean that?" cried out one of the voices.

"Why not? To my mind the very fact that Talika still lives proves that Carter is also alive, and that she knows it."

"Then where is he?"

"Here among us—a passenger."

"Bah! You talk in riddles."

"Listen, my friends. On the very morning after the disappearance there was a stranger appeared among us. It was given out that he had been ill in his room all the time since the ship sailed, but—well, I happen to know that is not true."

"How so?"

"Because the room he occupies was vacant until then."

"How do you know that?"

"By accident. It was a nice room, and I looked into it once, wishing that I could make an exchange and secure it."

"You are sure about what you say?"

"Certainly."

"Then why have you not told us about this before? Why have you waited until now?"

"It was not my affair. My duties do not begin until we reach the other side of the ocean. You all know that. It is no part of my duty to help you."

"That is true."

"But I have been watching; I have been watching all the time."

"Well, and what have you discovered?"

"Nothing more than I have told you; that is, almost nothing."

"Well, tell us what little you have seen."

"I saw the man for the first time when he was reading the bulletin announcement, the morning after the hurricane. A little later I happened to glance down the companionway of the saloon and he was still there, but now Talika was standing near him, also reading the bulletin. He was watching her as a cat watches a mouse. Not a motion that she made, not a quiver of her eyelash, escaped him. I saw it, and it interested me."

"Well, what did you do?"

"I kept on watching."

"And then?"

"After a little I saw Talika start back again for her

own room. I thought then that she was going there to bathe and dress, preparatory to throwing herself into the sea; and I believe now it was what she intended to do when she started to return to her room."

"You think so?"

"Yes. Her countenance is like a book. I can read it; at least I could read it then. If ever there was unmixed joy in a Nipponese woman's face it shone in hers then, because she was going to join her lover."

"Go on. What happened? Why did she change her mind?"

"Ah! I will reply to the first half of your question."

"As you please."

"This is what happened: When she started for the deck, the stranger followed her. He remained closely at her side all the time, as if he, too, had read what she intended to do, and was determined to prevent it."

"But a white devil—if he is a white devil disguised as a Nipponese—would not read her intention. He would not know about it."

"Nick Carter would know. Anyhow, that man, whoever he is, knew."

"What did he do? Tell us about it."

"He kept close to her, so that he could reach out and touch her at any moment. Once, when Talika stopped and gazed off across the water, he actually stepped in front of her, as if he feared she would leap into the sea then and there. He did not know that she had first to bathe and dress herself for the journey."

"No."

"Talika looked at him, then, but she did not appear to notice him. I would have seen it if she had. I would have known if she had been playing a part."

"Of course."

"Then she turned again to her room and opened the door; but as she entered, he followed her inside, and closed the door after him. There; is that proof enough? A moment before that time she did not know him at all, and yet she permitted him to follow her into her room on the deck, and to close the door. There was no outcry. She did not resent the act. Does it not, therefore, follow that he said a word to her the instant he entered the room that quieted her? Does it not follow that he instantly made himself known?"

"It would seem so."

"Seem so! It *is* so. And since then are not the two frequently together on the deck?"

"I have seen them together," said another voice that had not spoken before; and it was followed by others who said the same thing.

Nogasuka continued:

"I have approached them frequently when they have been talking together, but always they stop when I approach, or I am aware that they have changed the subject of their discussion. The man is Nick Carter. I am sure of it."

"You should have told us about it before."

"No; I am even foolish to tell you of it now. I should have permitted you to fail altogether, and then have followed my man after we make port. It is no business of mine what happens to him or what does not happen to him while he is aboard this ship. My work does not begin till we reach port: and yours, Mustushimi, does not begin till I have failed."

"No," replied the man called Mustushimi.

"And, therefore, it will never begin at all, for I shall not fail," continued Nogasuka.

"Hanshu failed, and he was even more certain of success than you are."

"And Kuroki has taken up his work. Well, Kuroki, you will admit that I have helped you. I say to you, kill the man who now calls himself Malichi, and you will kill Nick Carter. Thus will the memory of our great chief, Maoki, be avenged."

"And I will do it!" Nick could hear the man stamp his foot on the floor. "I will do it now. I will not wait. I know where his room is located. I will go to it now. *Now.* Wait here for me, and after a little I will return with the mission accomplished. Will you wait?"

"Yes," they assented; and Nick Carter glided away out of sight as the man came out upon the deck on his errand of death. Only, as we happen to know, there was no victim awaiting him.

CHAPTER X.

NICK CARTER OUTWITS AN ASSASSIN.

The detective instantly determined how he would act in this extremity.

He was aware of the fact that there had been five men engaged in the consultation he had so fortunately overheard. He had been able to determine that much by the sound of their voices, although he had picked up only three of the names; and the faces of the men he had not seen at all.

Two of them only had he seen at any time, and those were the two he had noticed near the ship's bulletin at the time of the announcement of the death of Nick Carter; but even now he did not know how to connect the names with them.

He had heard the names Nogasuka, Mustushimi, and Kuroki used inside that room, but it was doubtful if the men had taken passage on the ship under their own names.

As he glided away he congratulated himself on the fortunate circumstance which had enabled him to overhear that conversation, since if he had not done so, he might have been sleeping by now, and, therefore, have become an easy victim for the man who had been badgered by his associates into swearing that he would commit the murder without more delay.

When Nick started away he hurried with all speed down the narrow stairs to the deck below, and passed into his own room.

He knew that he had but a few seconds in which to accomplish what he wished to do, and the instant he entered and closed the door after him, he seized the extra blanket, which was lying in a roll at the foot of his berth, pulled back the covers of the bed, and forced the roll beneath them.

Then he pulled the bedclothes over the rolled blanket and stepped back away from it just as he heard the stealthy tread of the assassin outside the door. The man had stopped to listen to discover if his intended victim were sleeping or not.

Nick glanced toward his bed and smiled. There was just enough light coming in at the bull's-eye opening to enable one to see that there was something in the bed; that was all. It would require a close inspection indeed to determine that is was *not* a man who was sleeping there.

As he stepped back, he assumed a position which would bring him directly behind the door when it should be opened; and then, as he knew the man was listening, he breathed heavily a couple of times, like a man who was sleeping soundly and well.

The sound seemed to satisfy the assassin outside, for instantly Nick heard his hand upon the knob of the door and heard the grating of the latch as it was turned. Then the door was pushed slowly and silently ajar.

More light stole into the room through this opening, and by it Nick could see the head and shoulders of the Jap as he bent forward to peer inside.

But the room was darker than the deck outside, and the Jap could see nothing save the outlines of what he supposed to be a man stretched between the covers.

For a moment more he appeared to hesitate; but then he advanced slowly, thrusting one foot across the threshold inside the room, and dragging the other one slowly after it.

He did not make a sound; and after that first advance, he moved swiftly.

In an instant he was inside the room; in another he was bending over the bed; and then—for Nick could see him quite plainly now—he struck a swift downward blow with his right hand, and Nick could hear the sound of the blow as it fell upon the rolled blanket beneath the covers, burying a murderous knife to the hilt in the bedclothes.

Of course the instant he struck the blow, the instant the point of the knife touched the rolled blanket, the assassin realized that he had been fooled, and that it was not the body of a man lying on the bed.

Men will think quickly under such conditions, and it is possible that in that instant he realized his own danger.

But whether he did or not, he had no time to act or to cry out, for no sooner had his arm fallen in the murderous blow, than Nick Carter seized him.

And he seized him, too, after a manner of his own, grasping him by the throat with his left hand and clutching him by his thick, black, coarse hair with the right hand; and then, while the detective shut off the Jap's wind and the possibility of making a sound, he also pulled the assassin's head sharply backward until there was actual danger that the man's neck would be broken under the strain put upon it.

At the very same instant Nick's right knee delivered a sharp blow in the "small" of the Jap's back, over the kidneys, with the result that he collapsed upon the floor as helpless as a babe, and for the moment, at least, incapable of moving a muscle or uttering a sound.

Nick Carter worked rapidly now.

He pulled a pillow-case from one of the pillows on the bed, twisted it, forced it between the Jap's jaws, and tied it tightly at the back of his head. He seized a towel from the rack, twisted that, knotted it around one of the Jap's wrists, pulled both hands sharply behind the fellow's back, and tied them securely together there.

A second towel provided the same accommodation for the Jap's ankles, and within three minutes from the time the fellow entered the room, he was bound and gagged and utterly helpless.

For just a moment then the detective was undecided what to do next.

He stood thinking for a moment, then he lifted the man and threw him into the upper berth.

The Jap was conscious, although he was entirely helpless; and as the detective deposited him upon the upper berth, he said:

"If you try to roll out of there, you will only succeed in hurting yourself, so take my advice and don't try it."

Nick left the room abruptly then, for he had determined that he would capture the whole gang while he was about it.

He locked the door after him and put the key in his pocket, and then made his way swiftly to the upper deck again.

It was his purpose to go to the room where he had overheard the consultation, to thrust his head in at the window, and, with a revolver in either hand, hold them up and demand that they all surrender; thus, he thought, he would make an end of the whole conspiracy at once.

There was a light burning in the room still, as Nick approached it.

He hesitated for a moment to listen, but could hear no sound, and he concluded that the other conspirators were waiting in silence for the return of the man who had gone out to commit the act of assassination.

Convinced of this, thoroughly satisfied that the other four men were still there, Nick suddenly raised himself, stepped forward, thrust his head and shoulders and arms through the opening—and discovered that the room was deserted.

It was a disappointment; a bitter one, too.

He withdrew as quickly as he had made the advance, and, stepping aside into a shadow, waited several moments, listening for a sound of some sort, for he had an idea that the four men might not be far distant.

In that, however, he was mistaken.

The Japanese are the most cautious people in the world, and it had not occurred to any of the four to await the return of their companion who had gone out to kill Nick Carter. He might be discovered in the act he was about to commit. He might be pursued back to his room, and it would not have been healthy for them to be found there awaiting him, if such should be the case.

Therefore, the moment he left them, each glided away swiftly to his own particular quarters aboard the ship; and, reaching them, each got quickly into his own berth.

As Nick thought the matter over, he realized that this was what had happened; and he realized, also, that he was no nearer to capturing the other four than he had been in the beginning.

More than that, his disguise had now become a useless thing indeed, since the assassins were perfectly well aware who he was, thanks to the shrewdness of the man who was called Nogasuka.

It was now nearly four o'clock in the morning, and daylight was beginning to appear in the east.

Nick returned to his own room, entered, and turned on the lights; then he examined the features of his captive, discovering as he did so that the man was one of the two who had conversed in his hearing near the bulletin-board the morning after the storm.

And he knew that the man was Kuroki, because of the conversation he had overheard; he was also aware that the other man whose face he knew was Nogasuka; but there were still at least three others, and possibly more, whose faces he did not know.

The Jap glared at him while he was making the investigation, but, of course, he could not speak, since he was so thoroughly gagged.

Nick drew back again and glanced at the lower berth, smiling grimly as he did so, for there in mute evidence of what might have happened, piercing the bedclothing and the rolled blanket to the guard, was the long knife that Kuroki had used when he entered the room—used in the belief that he was driving the weapon into the body of Nick Carter.

The detective extinguished the light again and went forward until he stood as near the bridge as he could get; then he called softly to the officer on watch, who was pacing slowly from port to starboard and back again to port in the gathering light of the early morning.

The officer on watch did not reply to him at first, but as Nick repeated his low-toned call, he stopped, leaned forward, and demanded to know what was wanted.

"I wish to know if the captain happens to be astir," said the detective. "If he is not sleeping, I would like to speak to him at once. If he is asleep, I will wait; but the matter is important."

"The captain is awake. He has just gone below, to his room. What do you want?"

"Will you kindly inform him that the man who is called Malichi would like to see him on a matter of importance? He will understand, and he will see me."

For a moment the second officer hesitated; then he nodded and disappeared, and a moment later the door of the chart-room was thrown open, and the captain thrust his head outside.

"Come in," he said, in a low tone. "I turned in early last night, knowing that I would have a good night to sleep. The result is that I am up rather early this morning."

Nick went inside.

"Captain," he said, "you expressed the hope that I would track down those assassins before we reached port. I have come to tell you that I have got one of them. I caught him in the act of driving a knife through a rolled blanket under the bedclothes of my berth. He is bound and gagged and is in my room now; and I know positively now who one more of them is. May I make a suggestion?"

"Yes. Certainly, Mr. Carter."

"I would suggest, then, that the chief steward and the purser be called and that we all go together to my room in order that you may have all the necessary evidence. After that, that this man Kuroki be locked up securely and kept locked up till you are back again in Japan, where you can turn him over to the proper officers with the absolute assurance that he will be punished."

"That's all right. Anything more?"

"Yes. With the chief steward's assistance we can find out where the other one I know is roomed. I refer to Nogasuka. We will go to his room, place him in irons, and lock him up also."

"Come on, Carter. Possibly we can make those two talk, and betray their accomplices."

"No, captain. I hardly think that. They will not betray one another. Torture would not make them do that. But I know the voices of three others, even if I do not know their faces or names. It will be strange if we do not capture them before we reach port."

CHAPTER XI.

CORNERING THE PLOTTERS.

The very first thing that Nick Carter did after Kuroki and Nogasuka were securely ironed and locked up in the ship's strong room, was to seek Tom Harnett, for there was no longer any necessity of leaving him and General Lakatira in ignorance of the fact that the detective was still very much alive.

He found Harnett in his own room, where he was dressing, preparatory to going out on deck.

When Nick rapped at the door the Anglo-Japanese opened it and stood staring at the apparent stranger who had called upon him so early in the morning; and before he could offer any objection, Nick stepped through the door and closed it after him.

"Tom," he said quickly, "I am Nick Carter. Don't exclaim. Just accept it as a fact. Shake hands, old chap, and forgive me for permitting you to suppose that I was dead."

For a moment Harnett stared in speechless amazement at his friend while tears gathered slowly in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured presently; and then: "Nick, how I have mourned for you! And the old general, too. Do you know that if you had been really dead, the old general would have taken his own life as soon as he made his report to the emperor?"

"Yes. I know," replied Nick. "Perhaps I should have told you both, at once, and not have left you in this suspense; but it seemed the best way for me to do as I have done."

"You know best; but it has been a terrible trial, Nick."

"Will you forgive me, Tom?"

"Forgive you? What a question! Of course."

"And the general? Do you think that he will forgive me for what I have made him suffer in anticipation of his own suicide?"

"My dear Nick, don't you know that the delight he will feel in knowing that he has *not* failed in his mission, to say nothing of the fact that you are really alive, will much more than offset anything that he has suffered? But what have you accomplished by the act? How did you escape, and how——"

"Hold on, Tom," interrupted the detective, laughing. "One question at a time. I was very nearly lost in that storm, and the man who tried to murder me—Hanshu—did lose his life. I did not kill him; an accident did that."

"Well, you are rid of one of them at least."

"We are rid of three of them, Tom. Two others—men who are called Kuroki and Nogasuka—are in irons now. But there are still three others at least at large. We have got to round them up somehow."

"We will, too. Say, Nick, I want to ask you a question."

"Yes?"

"Does Talika know that you are alive?"

"Yes; she knew it within fifteen minutes after she first saw the bulletin that morning."

"You told her yourself?"

"Yes."

"I did not know that you were aware that she was aboard the ship."

"I was not until the night of the storm. I was leaving her room after calling upon her, to return to my own, when the storm struck us—and when Hanshu attacked me. I'll tell you about that storm some time, Tom."

"All right. Talika has been a puzzle to us—to the general and me. The fact that she did not throw herself into the sea after you were reported dead—— Well! I believe that the general has been convinced all the time that you were still alive."

"I perceive, Tom," said the detective, with a twinkle in his eyes, "that you have had your secrets from me as well as I from you. You knew all the time, even before we left port, that Talika was aboard the ship, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was ordered not to do so."

"By whom?"

"By the emperor."

"Then—— Do you mean to tell me that the emperor knew that Talika was to be a passenger on this ship?"

"He certainly did."

"Even before I took my leave of him?"

"It was decided the day before your departure from Tokio. She overheard the report that the general made to the emperor, and she begged so hard to be permitted to make one of the guards over you, that the emperor gave his consent. Indeed, Nick, she spotted three of the assassins before we left the wharf, and they were not permitted to sail. They have been beheaded by this time."

They were interrupted at that moment by a tapping upon the door, and, upon opening it, General Lakatira was discovered.

He did not evince any surprise as he stepped into the room, but with a glance and a nod at his son-in-law, he turned at once to Nick and said:

"So, Mr. Carter, you have been revealing yourself, have you?" and he smiled and stuck out his hand in cordial greeting.

"What!" exclaimed Nick. "You know?"

"Since the evening of the day after the storm; yes."

"Talika told you?"

"Yes."

"It was because of her advice to the contrary that I did not make myself known to you, general," said Nick.

"Yes. I know that. She told me. But she knew that I was suffering, and she called me to her room and told me."

"I think you might have told me, too," said Harnett. "I seem to be the only one who was kept in suspense over the matter."

The general permitted himself to smile.

"All is well that ends well," he said; "only we must not allow ourselves to forget that the danger is still as great as ever. Mr. Carter, may I ask what it was that determined you to make yourself known to Thomas this morning?"

"I did it because I have discovered that my disguise is known to the enemy. One of them, as you are aware, is dead. Two others are locked up and in irons in the hold. But there are three, and doubtless others, still at liberty."

"More than three, Mr. Carter. There must be nine of them still at large aboard this vessel."

"How do you arrive at that conclusion, general?"

"I know that originally there were fifteen, counting the assistants which the appointed assassins brought with them."

"Well?"

"Three were recognized by Talika as followers of Maoki, before we left port. They were detained, and not permitted to sail. One other is dead, and two others are prisoners, you inform me. That makes six accounted for—and, therefore, nine are still at large."

"There were only five in the consultation I overheard last night, or, rather, early this morning."

"Those would be the five principals, two of whom are prisoners."

"But I understood you in the beginning that there were only three principals."

"Ah! So I supposed, myself. But it would appear that in your case Maoki took the precaution of appointing a double number, for vengeance. Instead of sending three men out, as is usually the case, he sent six. Logi didn't know that, you see; but it is now apparent."

"Then, as I figure it out, we have rid ourselves of three of the principals; eh?"

"Yes."

"Hanshu, Kuroki, and Nogasuka."

"Precisely."

"Well, see if I have got this part of it correctly. It was Hanshu's business to kill me while the steamer is crossing the ocean. He lost his life, and Kuroki, whose regular duty was not supposed to begin till we reached port, took his place."

"Exactly."

"Then Nogasuka, whose duties would not ordinarily commence till we are on the other side, would have in turn taken Kuroki's place, if he were still at liberty. Eh? Is that right?"

"I think so."

"General, there is one other name that I heard used at that consultation, although it is not on the passenger-list, and I have no idea who the man is. Possibly you may know it."

"Possibly. Let me hear it."

"He was called Mustushimi."

"What! Mustushimi? Are you sure?"

"Positively so, general."

The general reached out one hand and pressed the electric button near him. Then he turned again to the detective.

"Mr. Carter, are you armed?" he asked.

"I have these," replied Nick, holding out both hands empty. "Why?"

One of the stewards appeared at that moment, and the general gave his attention to him before replying to Nick's question.

"The compliments of General Lakatira to the gentleman in room thirty-nine," he said, "and say to the gentleman that I would be glad if he would come here at once, to settle a dispute that has arisen."

As soon as the steward had disappeared on his errand, the general turned again to the detective.

"Mr. Carter," he said, "the man I have sent for is Mustushimi. He is going to America under an assumed name, ostensibly for purposes which he has already detailed to me; and I have believed him. I have had no idea that he could be in any way associated with the followers of Maoki, and even now, after what you have said, I am loath to believe it. He is an officer in the army; I have always counted him as one of my friends. You say you have not seen the man's face?"

"No."

"Then you will not be able to identify him?"

"I have heard his voice."

"Do you think you could identify him by that?"

"I am sure of it."

"Mustushimi," murmured the general. "I cannot believe it; or, at least, if it is so, I cannot understand it at all. Will you stand there, Mr. Carter, and do as I direct?" He pointed to a position that would place Nick behind the door when it opened.

"Yes."

The general pulled the door partly open, so that Nick was entirely shielded; then he said:

"I will take my stand here; Harnett will stand there. When Mustushimi enters the room, he will naturally face us, and that will put you directly behind him. The moment he is inside the door, I will close it. Then, instantly, you must seize his arms and hold him so that he cannot move, for if he is one of the appointed assassins, he will strike the moment he realizes that he is discovered. You are strong enough to hold him, I think."

"I think so," smiled the detective.

"Then make ready. Here he comes."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONSPIRATORS' LAST EFFORT.

Mustushimi stepped inside the room, apparently without suspicion. He was, so far as appearances went, at least, a gentleman; one of the last ones whom Nick would have selected as a member of the company of appointed assassins.

The moment he was well inside the room, General Lakatira swung the door shut, and at the same instant Nick Carter seized him from behind, drawing his elbows sharply together, and so holding the man that he could not move.

He made just one spasmodic struggle, and then perceiving that he was helpless, resigned himself to the capture.

"Colonel Mustushimi," said General Lakatira, speaking with great calmness, "if we are doing you a wrong, suitable amends will be made to you; but I am acting under the direct orders of our august master, and, therefore, must use every precaution. A charge has been made against you which you must convince me is untrue before you can be released. I know you to be a Samauri, and, therefore, a man of honor. I expect, therefore, that you will reply truthfully to my questions so far as you are personally concerned. I shall not question you concerning others."

The general paused for a response, but there was no reply. After a moment he continued:

"The man who stands behind you, holding you, was

appointed for death by General Maoki, after his arrest and imprisonment. There were six men named to carry out the decree of vengeance, and those six engaged nine others to assist them, making fifteen in all. Last night there was a consultation between five of those men, during which your name was used. that is my excuse for my present attitude."

He paused again, but still there was no answer.

"Colonel Mustushimi, are you one of the original six men I have referred to? I know that you would not be one of the other nine. Answer me."

"I am, general," was the calm reply, uttered without emotion of any kind.

"Then you are aware of the identity of the man who is now holding you helpless?"

"I suppose him to be the American who is called Nick Carter."

"You are correct. How comes it that you are serving in the interests of Maoki?"

"My father served his father and grandfather. My loyalty belonged to him. The service I am now on was repugnant to me, but rather than take my own life, I accepted it. I do not like the Yankees, anyway, as you know. I would like to blow them off the face of the earth, and drive them out of their ships. I accepted the appointment."

"And now?"

"I am conquered, general. I am your prisoner."

"Colonel Mustushimi, I have always respected you. Would you have me release you?"

"Yes, general; if you will do so."

"May I rely upon you? Upon your honor?"

"You may."

"Without converse with your associates?"

"Yes."

"Release the colonel, Mr. Carter."

Being released, Mustushimi turned and faced Nick Carter. Then he bowed low, first to him, then to Harnett, then to the general. Then, without a word, he turned abruptly and left the room, walking with head erect, as if he had won favor by an act of patriotism, rather than have been caught as a would-be assassin.

Nick was gazing in surprise at the old general, and he replied to the unasked question:

"The colonel is a warrior. He has won renown on the battle-field. He will supply the place of the law, and be his own executioner, Mr. Carter. Colonel Mustushimi is dead already, so far as the world is concerned. He will not exchange another word with his associates, and in his own good time, within one day or two or three, he will pass across the shadow into the other life. He thanks me for it, and even now he is thinking kind thoughts of you for permitting him to die with honor. Come! Let us go outside into the air. This has saddened me."

The three passed out together to the deck and strode along it to the waist of the ship, where the deck extended from rail to rail.

Here there were a number of passengers already in evidence. A party of gentlemen and ladies were talking and laughing together near the starboard rail. Over at the port side, a gentleman was bending over a woman, evidently his mother, who reclined in a steamer-chair. A little farther aft, leaning against the rail that extended athwartships and divided that part of the vessel from the second-class passengers on the next deck below, a group of men—Japanese, they were—were engaged in some kind of an animated discussion. There were eight of them, Nick noticed, and first one and then another and another glanced up at their approach, until all the eight were gazing with their eyes fixed upon Nick Carter.

At the very center of the deck, standing alone and looking off over the water, was Talika; but she raised her head at Nick's approach, and smiled upon him. Lakatira and Harnett had both stopped a few yards in the rear, in response to a request of Mustushimi, who intercepted them.

As Nick Carter paused beside Talika, he half-turned his back toward the eight men who have been mentioned, forgetting them utterly for the moment.

"Good morning, Talika," he said. "I was hoping that you would be here, for I——"

He was interrupted by a sharp cry of warning in the voice of Lakatira; he heard, also, at the same instant, the voice of Tom Harnett crying out.

He half-turned, and at that instant he was seized from behind by many hands, and he felt himself lifted from his feet and hurried toward the rail; also there was a sharp, stinging pain in his side, which told him that he had been stabbed.

A cry from the lips of Talika told him that she had also been seized; and then, as he exerted his great strength to the utmost and tore himself free from the hands that had seized upon him, he saw Talika as she was lifted from her feet and hurled bodily over the port rail into the ocean.

When he tore himself loose from the men who had attacked him, others tried to seize him, but his fists shot out this way and that, clearing a space in front of him in an instant, and then, forgetting that he was

wounded, he ran toward the rail over which Talika had disappeared, and took a flying leap into the sea.

It had all happened while you might have counted five, and just as it happened the captain came from behind the deck-house and saw it all.

Nick Carter struck the water head downward like a professional diver.

He could see, as he made the leap, the form of Talika with her arms uplifted and her face turned toward him. She was already a hundred feet or more astern of the rapidly moving ship.

When Nick dove he swam onward under water toward the point where he had caught that last glimpse of Talika, but when he came to the surface she was nowhere to be seen.

He swam onward with the swift overhand stroke, toward the spot where he believed she must come to the surface again, and then once again he dove into the depths, seeking her.

Down, far down beneath him, he saw her form through the green water as it rose slowly toward the surface, and he seized her at last and shot with her to the crest of the waves, where he managed to hold her head high out of the water while he kept himself afloat by the use of his feet.

"Talika," he said. "Talika!"

She opened her eyes for an instant, smiled upon him, and closed them again; and as she did so her head fell over to one side until it rested against his own.

He knew then that she had fainted, or at least that she had lost consciousness, and he called aloud to the men in the boat that was approaching them to hasten.

They arrived presently, and took the limp form of Talika into the boat; then they pulled the detective over the gunwale; and it was then for the first time that he remembered that he had been wounded, for the salt water entering the wound made it smart acutely.

But he knew that the wound could not be more than a scratch, since he was conscious of no weakness from it, and he bent forward over the form of Talika, calling to her, chafing her hands, and trying in other ways to bring her back to consciousness.

And so they arrived at the ship's side and were taken aboard; and Lakatira, Harnett, the captain, and others were there to receive them.

Instantly the ship's surgeon took charge of Talika, and she was carried to her cabin, Nick following closely. At the door, however, the surgeon stopped him.

"Mr. Carter," he said, "you can do nothing now; I will do everything, and—— What? Are you wounded, sir?"

"Yes. It is only a scratch. The knife only grazed me. Attend to Talika; not to me."

"Go, then, and get on dry clothing; at once," ordered the physician.

"No," said Nick, with decision. "I will wait here at the door, doctor. Let me know at once how she is. I will wait here;" and he stood there while the physician and the stewardess passed inside the room.

But Nick had only a moment to wait. The doctor was not gone two minutes before he came outside again, his face stern and gray.

"What is it?" asked Nick breathlessly.

"Mr. Carter," replied the doctor slowly, "she is dead. She must have died before she even struck the water. She was stabbed before she was thrown into the sea."

"But," exclaimed Nick, "she opened her eyes and smiled at me when I got her. Oh, doctor, it cannot be true."

"It is true, Mr. Carter; true as gospel. And as for opening her eyes—you must have imagined that, sir. It was impossible! Impossible!"

"And yet it is true, doctor; I swear it is. Stand aside, please, and let me go to her."

* * * * * * *

Six more men were in the hold in irons, three of them more or less severely wounded. The other two of the eight—the two who had rushed to the side of the ship with Talika and thrown her into the sea—had been shot down by General Lakatira, even as Nick made his leap to rescue her; and thus she was avenged even before she died herself.

When the great ship arrived at its destination there was a passenger missing, and none knew what had become of him; that is, none save Lakatira, who one morning found a note in Japanese in his room. It was signed "Mustushimi," and it said merely:

"Good-by. I thank you; also the American, Carter, for whose forgiveness I ask."

The prisoners, by request of the mikado conveyed by cable, were returned to Japan. The consequences need not be explained.

THE END.

The next number (604) will be "The Convict's Secret; or, Nick Carter on the Trail of Facts."

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

NEW YORK, July 18, 1908.

TERMS TO NICK CARTER WEEKLY MAIL SUBSCRIBERS.
(Postage Free)
Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.	One year	$2.50
6 months	80c.	2 copies one year	4.00
9 months	$1.25	1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

OSMOND G. SMITH, GEORGE C. SMITH, } Proprietors.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

Many anxious hearts had been awaiting, during the Christmas and New-year celebrations, news concerning the safety of the big Canadian Pacific liner *Mount Royal*. This four-master steamer of 7,000 tons left Antwerp on December 7th, 1907, for St. John, New Brunswick, with 300 passengers and a crew of 200 on board. Allowing for delays, she was more than a fortnight overdue, and many began to fear, ere her safe arrival in Queenstown Harbor was flashed along the wires, that one more would have to be added to the long list of missing vessels whose fate has never been properly determined.

People began to think that, as in the case of the Allan liner *Huronian*, which, in February, 1902, quitted Glasgow for St. John and disappeared, leaving no trace as to her fate, the *Mount Royal* would never be heard of again until the sea gave up its dead.

No less mysterious than the fate of the *Huronian* was that of the *Nicaraguan*, a steel screw steamer of 3,643 tons, which left Liverpool on April 13th, 1907, for the West Indies, subsequently proceeded to this country, and, after sailing from Norfolk, Virginia, for Dublin, vanished from mortal view.

Usually, by means of wreckage or the report of some passing vessel, the fate of a missing ship can at least be surmised; but often no trace is left "to tell the tale." In 1903 the Australian steamer *Klek* disappeared somewhere in the Arabian Sea, and, although a special vessel was sent out to search for signs of her, nothing could be found which gave a clue as to her fate.

Two lifeboats, floating about bottom upward, were all that was ever found of the White Star liner *Nevonic*, which vanished in 1903. How this vessel of 6,500 tons came to disaster has never been satisfactorily settled.

The loss of the British gunboat *Condor* in the Pacific in December, 1901, is another ocean mystery. The *Condor*, with about 150 officers and men, was known to have been cruising near Cape Flattery, in British Columbia, about the date mentioned. It was also known that there was a great storm at that time, and it is surmised that the *Condor* foundered and all the crew perished.

In 1859 the *Blervie Castle*, with fifty-seven people on board, sailed from London Docks for Adelaide. She was spoken on Christmas Day, but never afterward. "We are sinking," written on a board picked up off the Cornish coast in 1871, afforded the only clue ever obtained as to the fate of the *City of Boston*, which left New York for England on February 11th of that year.

One of the most disastrous storms in its consequences to lighthouses was in September, 1906, when forty-four were either swept into the sea and lost or were so badly damaged that no light could be shown. Four of the keepers were drowned.

The importance of sticking to the job is shown by the experience of two sets of keepers of small lights in a certain bay. The bay, though it was more a river than a bay, was full of ice, which threatened to carry the lighthouse away. The two men at the light stuck to their post.

The structure was carried off, was swept down a considerable distance, but finally lodged so that the men could escape. They made things as fast as they could and reported the damage.

The other two men meanwhile had figured that no vessel could possibly be out in that particular ice gorge, and that the lighthouse itself was in a precarious position. They got out while they could, and made their way to safety. They were severely reprimanded for doing so, while the first two named were warmly praised.

By means of a steel-lined irrigation canal engineers are preparing to give water to a desert district of Egypt near Assouan which has been parched for over 3,000 years. The soil is saline, and for this reason it is necessary to swamp and wash the ground for from three to four weeks before any crops can be grown upon it. When first wet the ground swells and rises about six inches, afterward subsiding from one to two feet.

An automobile boat, capable of going either through the water or on land, and of passing from one to the other without delay or the dismounting of its occupants, has been exhibited under the auspices of the touring club of France by M. Ravaillier. The inventor claims that his craft or machine can be used advantageously wherever rivers are to be crossed without bridges, unless the banks be too steep. By the operation of a lever the driver changes the application of the motive power from the wheels to the propeller fixed at the rear of the boat-shaped auto. There is a rudder attachment, and the forward wheels can also be used to direct the course when afloat.

This peculiar contrivance worked like a charm when exhibited recently near New York City.

Doctor Tissot has been demonstrating before the French Academy the possibility of working for long periods in an

irrespirable atmosphere. The air expired from the lungs was conducted into a regenerator containing a solution of potash, which absorbs the carbonic acid. At the same time a current of oxygen is introduced through a flexible tube from a supply compressed in a cylinder. With an apparatus of this kind Doctor Tissot remained during four hours in a chamber filled with illuminating-gas where animals not thus protected were immediately asphyxiated.

The Unconscious Crime.

A DETECTIVE'S PECULIAR EXPERIENCE.

One beautiful July morning, a messenger entered our office and placed in the hands of the chief this laconic message:

"Send me a man immediately. JOHN LEVONT."

Having read it, he passed it to me, saying:

"Answer it in person, Herron. Mr. Levont is senior member of Levont & Thomas, brokers, No. 127 —— Street."

Twenty minutes later I was in the presence of Mr. Levont, whom I found in his private office, writing busily.

"Good morning!" he pleasantly remarked. "What can I do for you?"

"I have come here from the detective bureau, to which you, a short time since, sent a message."

"Oh, yes. Please be seated, and as soon as I've finished this letter I will attend to you."

I sat down, and, while he was occupied with the missive, carefully studied him whom I had never seen before.

He was tall, well-built, possessed of faultless features, a wealth of hair upon his head, that showed not a single bald spot, though the hair was white as snow, as was his heavy mustache.

He was of very pleasing manners.

By the time I had completed this mental inventory, he had sealed his letter, and, turning to me, said:

"You will kindly excuse me for detaining you, but it is highly important that my letter should go by the post leaving the city at 11:20"—ringing the bell as he spoke—responsive to which a boy came, to whom he gave the missive, requesting him to hasten it to the post-office.

Mr. Levont's story was rather an old one, and this was its substance:

"For some weeks past," said he, when we were alone, "my wife has lost considerable sums of money, jewelry, diamonds, etc., from her sleeping-room.

"Now, invariably, when my wife retires to sleep, it is her custom, after securing the doors and the windows—her room is on the second floor—to place her jewelry, etc., in her especial safe, which is of the latest make, and to lock it; and yet, although she is never disturbed during the night, at least once a week, on opening the safe in the morning, she'll find something missing.

"The peculiar part of it is, that she always finds everything as she left it upon retiring—the safe locked and everything correct after the robbery.

"This is the mystery which I have at last determined to engage a detective to solve."

"Very well, sir," said I; "I will undertake the case, for I feel certain that the mystery is in the fact that there exists some secret way of ingress and egress to and from the sleeping-room, of the existence of which you're in ignorance."

"Yes," said Mr. Levont, "it must be as you surmise, and yet, although the same idea occurred to me some months ago, the closest investigation has failed to reveal the existence of a secret passage, or anything of the kind.

"However, I wish you to investigate, for I desire your personal attention in this case."

"I am at your service," said I, adding: "Of whom does your household consist?"

"Of myself, my wife, a coachman, butler, and two female domestics.

"I am sure, however, they're all innocent, for they have all served faithfully for many years."

"Possibly not. But, by the way, has any one in the house a key to your wife's room save herself?" I asked.

"One person."

"Ah!"

"Her maid, Elenoir. She occupies a room adjoining, and is privileged to enter at any time.

"She's quite a superior person, I assure you, having seen better days, and——"

"Consequently above suspicion."

"I think so."

"Can I see the maid?"

"No; she is not in my employ at present."

"Gone where?" I asked.

"I do not know."

Mr. Levont, in spite of his hauteur, seemed embarrassed, and I saw that he had not told me all.

"If I'm to undertake this case, Mr. Levont," said I, "I must know the facts. Unless you are ready to confide in me, I shall go no further. This is imperative."

Mr. Levont recovered his self-possession quickly, and said:

"I just now informed you that the maid was above suspicion, and that is now my candid belief; but one morning shortly after my wife discovered the loss of a diamond bracelet, she summoned the maid and confronted her with an accusation of the theft.

"It was wrong in her, which she is now ready to admit.

"The maid took offense, and at once left our service."

"Do you know where she can be found?" I asked.

"No, sir. I haven't the remotest idea," he replied.

"Has she no friends in the city?"

"None. She was an orphan. Very poor and very proud. Of course," he added quickly, "I perceive it was indiscreet in sending the girl away."

"Too true," I returned. "It may be that she was the thief, in spite of your good opinion. And if Elenoir was the guilty one, it may be a hard matter to bring her to justice."

"I am confident that she is not guilty," he repeated, "as the thefts have continued ever since she departed.

"No, no; not for a moment do I suspect her or any one else in my household of complicity in the thefts of which my wife has now, unfortunately, been made the victim.

"However, the only way is to come and investigate for yourself."

"Certainly; and I must warn you to keep my profession and business a profound secret from all the members of your household."

"Assuredly I will not betray your identity," he hastily replied, adding: "You shall have my assistance in every way.

"It shall be understood that you're only an old friend of mine who has run down to the city from the North."

"Exactly," I assented. "I see that you have my idea."

This program was carried out to the letter, and I found myself Mr. Levont's guest the following day.

For some time I devoted myself to the solution of the chamber mystery—for it proved indeed to be much deeper a mystery than I had supposed it would—without any success whatever.

The most critical investigations failed to reveal the existence of any secret entrance to Mrs. Levont's sleeping-room, and at last I was forced to admit that there was none.

I had become fully aroused to the exigencies of the case, and, more than one night, unknown to the servants themselves, I had watched their rooms all night long.

But nothing occurred to give me the least clue to the solution of the affair, and I must confess that I was not a little crestfallen at my failure in a case regarding which I had been so sanguine of success.

I resolved to make a new move, and believed that soon I should arrive at a solution of the mystery.

The solution was not very long in coming.

As I have said, for more than one night, I kept a close watch upon the servants' rooms, but, as nothing came of it, I began to haunt the dimly lighted upper hall from which Mrs. Levont's room opened.

On one occasion, shortly after midnight, as I was passing back to my room, a faint sound fell upon my ear, which I quickly recognized as the creaking of a door on its hinges.

I quickly passed back down the hall until I stood in a position to look at the door of Mrs. Levont's apartment.

It stood open, and a white-robed form was just stepping across the threshold.

Noiselessly the door closed behind the white figure, and then, with slow and measured step, the apparition moved down the hall toward me.

What should I do?

Flight was then impossible without discovery, so I hugged the wall and waited the outcome.

Straight down the hall moved the white figure, and passed me without seeming to notice my proximity.

Could it be possible that the woman did not see me?

I could not believe it, and yet her movements certainly indicated that such was the case.

As I was in my stocking feet, I followed closely in the steps of the midnight prowler, without making the least noise.

Down the hall, then up a flight of stairs, down a narrower hall, then a pause before a door which stood slightly ajar.

I watched and waited.

This hall was quite dark, and with difficulty I watched the movements of the figure.

Presently she opened a small door and entered.

I followed at once, and then stood still and listened.

Distinctly to my ears came the sound of a match scratched against a rough surface.

Instinctively I crouched low as a flame banished the gloom.

I was not a little astonished to see the match applied to a lamp that stood on a box, thus giving permanence to the expelled gloom.

The light shone full on the face of the woman.

I was not disappointed when I recognized Mrs. Levont.

Lifting the lamp, she moved to the farthest end of the long attic—for such it proved to be—placed her light upon the somewhat loose floor, and, raising a short board, disclosed a heap of shining matter below.

One by one she drew them forth and held them up to the light.

A bracelet, from which sparkled a diamond, first came into view; then a gold watch, and last a roll of bank-notes.

"Mrs. Levont, the game is up! I have found you out at last," said I, in a low yet stern voice.

To my surprise, not a word was vouchsafed in answer.

The white, jeweled fingers caressed the gems as a child might its loved toys.

Was the woman deaf?

I questioned myself, as I advanced a step toward her.

Suddenly she replaced her hidden treasure and sprang upright.

At the same instant I threw my arms about her, and, looking into her face, I discovered the truth.

The broker's wife was a somnambulist!

The pressure of my arms about her served to awaken her, and a great cry escaped her, as she staggered from my embrace.

"Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Levont," said I. "I have found the thief."

Her screams were too far from human ears to attract attention.

My protecting arm was again needed to save the lady from falling when she realized the situation.

After it was over, however, and she could look calmly at the situation, she laughed aloud.

"So I am the thief!" she cried, as she looked upon the lost jewels, snugly ensconced in their nest under the boards. "Dear me, how queer!"

"It is queer," I replied. "Your husband didn't tell me that you were a sleep-walker."

"For the good reason neither he nor I knew it. I've wronged poor Elenoir, and shall find her and make it right with the poor girl," asserted the lady quickly.

Another found Elenoir, however, in advance of Mrs. Levont, and the next time she looked upon her waiting-maid, she was the wife of a wealthy but eccentric gentleman.

So the Levont affair turned out pleasantly, after all.

Of course, I was liberally rewarded for time spent in the broker's service.

I never look back on that night without a smile at that happy termination of what promised to be a first-class case.

The Nick Carter Weekly

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY — **BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS**

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the NICK CARTER WEEKLY contains the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the workings of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer.

The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world and the stories of his adventures are read eagerly by millions, in twenty different languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the NICK CARTER WEEKLY. It proves conclusively that they are best.

We give herewith a list of all the back numbers in print. You can have your newsdealer order them or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

831—Nick Carter's Thumb Clue.
832—Nick Carter and the Blue Death.
834—Nick Carter's Crooked Trail.
835—Nick Carter's False Clue.
838—Nick Carter and the Will Forgers.
843—Nick Carter and the Phantom of Poverty Lane.
844—Nick Carter Winning a Close Game.
845—Nick Carter and the Prince of Stranglers.
846—Nick Carter On and Off the Scent.
852—Nick Carter and the Langwork-thy Treasure.
853—Nick Carter Forging the Fetters.
854—Nick Carter from Peril to Peril.
857—Nick Carter in a Finish Fight.
858—Nick Carter and the Triple Identity.
859—Nick Carter and the "Queen of Diamonds."
860—Nick Carter and the Missing Jewels.
861—Nick Carter's Great Success.
862—Nick Carter's Search for a Motive.
863—Nick Carter's Double Capture.
864—Nick Carter's Capture of the Jenkins Brothers.
867—Nick Carter's Suicide Mystery.
870—Nick Carter's Diamond Trail.
872—Dazaar, the Arch Fiend.
873—The Queen of the Seers.
874—The Sign of the Dagger.
875—The Evil Worshipers.
876—The Cross of Daggers.
877—The Last of the Seven.
878—Jo Dirk, the Wonderful.
879—The Mystery of the Mikado.
881—The Crime Behind the Throne.
882—Holding Up a Nation.
883—Kidnaped in Broad Daylight.
885—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
886—When Foes Were Trumps.
887—The Gambler's Last Hand.
888—The Murder at Linden Fells.
889—Mercedes Danton's Double.
890—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
891—A Queen of the Underworld.
892—A Queen of Her Kind.
893—Isabel Benton's Trump Card.
894—A Princess of Hades.
901—The House with the Open Door.
902—The Society of Assassination.
904—The Trail of the Vampire.
905—Demons of the Night.
906—The Captain of the Vampire.
907—A Bank President's Plot.
908—The Masked Criminal.
909—The Carruthers Puzzle.
910—Inez, the Mysterious.
911—The Criminal Queen's Oath.
912—The Point of a Dagger.
913—Hearts, the Gypsy Queen.
922—Hy Command of the Czar.
923—The Passing Show of an Empire.
924—A Queen of Vengeance.
925—Dan Darrington's Double.
929—The Phantom Highwayman.
930—A Million Dollar Hold-up.
931—Nick Carter and the Man with the Crooked Mind.
932—Nick Carter's Convict Enemy.
933—The Pirate of the Sound.
934—The Cruise of the Shadow.
935—The Case of Imposters.
936—The Mystery of John Dashwood.
937—Following a Blind Trail.
938—The Crime of the Potomac.
939—In the Shadow of Death.
940—The Fear-Haunted Broker.
941—The Greenhouse Tragedy.
942—A Clever Grab.
943—The Mystery of the Front Room.
944—The Crime of Union Square.
945—A Mother Over Criminal.
946—The Broadway Cross.
947—The Seven Pockets.
948—The Quexel Tragedy.
950—Missing; a Sack of Gold.
951—The Great Cathedral Mystery.
952—A Play for a Million.
953—The Fear-Haunted Diamonds.
955—Nick Carter's Human Weapon.
956—The Compact of Death.
957—The Duke of Revenge.
958—A Tragedy of the Sea.
959—The Prince of Plots.
960—Kairo the Strong.
961—Nick Carter's Strange Power.
962—Nick Carter and the Marx-burg Affair.
963—The Mystery of the Cracksman.
964—The Mystery Man.
965—Scylla the Sea Robber.
966—The Beautiful Pirate of Oyster Bay.
967—The Man from Nevada.
968—Maguey, the Mexican.
969—Pedro, the Dog Detective.
970—The Automobile Fiend.
971—Bellini, the Black Hand.
972—The Black Hand's Nemesis.
973—An Expert in Graft.
974—Nick Carter's Terrible Experience.
975—The Mystery of an Untold Crime.
976—Diana, the Arch-demon.
977—Captain Satan, the Unknown.
978—A Wizard of the Highway.
979—Abducted in Broad Day.
980—The Tong of the Taillessness.
981—The Fugitive.
982—The Padlocked Mystery.
982—Dema, the Dangerous.
983—Nick Carter's Murder Problem.
984—A Battle Among the Clouds.
985—The Veiled Princess.
986—The Conquest of a Kingdom.
987—The House of Many Skeletons.
988—A Queen of Inferno.
989—Nick Carter's Foxy Adversary.
990—Three Times in Peril.
991—The Gold Lettered Dagger.
992—The Mysterious Affair.
993—A Dead Guardian of Millions.
994—The Mysterious Treasure Hunters.
995—The Klondike Bank Puzzle.
996—The "Bad Man" of Nome.
997—The Black Flag of Piracy.
998—Following an Unknown Trail.
999—A Clue from the Clouds.
500—Pharaoh, of the Ironarm.
501—The Man from Montana.
502—Ismailia, the Chieftain.
503—Nick Carter's Earthquake Clue.
504—Nick Carter Among the Bad Men.
505—The Man of Many Faces.
506—A Letter from the Dead.
507—Bare-faced Jimmy, the Gentle-man Crook.
508—The Gentleman Crook's Last Act.
509—The "Skiddoo" of the K. U. & T.
510—The Last of the Outlaws.
511—Nick Carter's Twin Mystery.
512—A Battle of Wits.
513—The Game for Millions.
514—Codman the Poisoner.
515—The Yellow Poisoner.
516—The Mechanical Giant.
517—Doris, the Unknown.
518—A Dangerous Woman.
519—Madge Morley's Ghost.
520—An Automobile Crackerman.
521—The Mysterious Stranger.
522—The White Arm of a Woman.
523—The Man in the Doorway.
524—The Plot of the Baron.
525—The Passenger on the Night Local.
526—A Double Mystery.
527—Clarice, the Comtess.
528—Clarice, the Woman Detective
529—The Index of Seven Stars.
530—An Amazonian Queen.
531—A Blackmailer's Paradise.
532—Gipsy Madge, the Blackmailer
533—Fear, an Unseen Terror.
534—Idayah, the Woman of Mystery.
535—The Making of a King.
536—The Empire of a Goddess.
537—Zanabaych, the Terrible.
538—The Seven-headed Monster.
539—The Woman of the Mask.
540—The Masked Woman's Daring Plot.
541—Hobo Harry, the Regent King.
542—Black Madge's Hobo Gang.
543—Black Madge's Vengeance.
544—Black Madge's Last Spotlights.
545—The Maynard Woman's Double.
546—Three Against Fifteen.
547—A Mystery of Two Passengers.
548—A Dead Man at the Feast.
549—A Tangle of Secrets.
550—The Lost Bank President.
551—Ralph Dolton's Double Plot.
552—The Dare-devil Crook.
553—A Mystery from the Klondyke.
554—Returned from the Grave.
555—The Mystery Man of 7-0p Ranch.
556—A Bad Man of Montana.
557—The Man from Arizona.
558—Kid Curry's Last Stand.
559—A Beautiful Anarchist.
560—The Nihilist's Second Move.
561—The Brotherhood of Free Rum.
562—A White House Mystery.
563—The Great Spy System.
564—The Last of Mansfield.
565—Secrets of a Haunted House.
566—Nick Carter in India.
567—The Plot of the Stanions.
568—The Criminal Trust.
569—The Nihilist of Crooks.
570—The Order of the Python.
571—The Fifty Rifles.
572—A Bargain With a Thief.
573—Peters, the Shrewd Crook.
574—The Last of the Empty Grave.
575—The Yellow Beryl.
576—The Dead Man on the Roof.
577—A Double-barreled Puzzle.
578—An Automobile Clue.
579—Jasper Ryan's Counter Move.
580—Nick Carter's Victory.
581—Plotters Against a Nation.
582—Mignon Dupree, the Female Sharp.
583—A Mystery of High Society.
584—Miffles, the Crook Detective.
585—The Signal of Seven Shots.
586—The "Shadow."
587—A Dead Man's Secret.
588—A Victim of Magic.
589—A Plot within a Palace.
590—The Countess Zeta's Defense.
591—The Prisoner's Last Effort.
592—The Two Lost Chittendens.
593—Miguel, the Avenger.
594—Rubalia, the Bandit Queen.
595—The Crystal Mystery.
596—A Battle of Wit and Skill.
597—Vanderdyken, the Millionaire.
598—Patsy's Vacation Problem.
599—The King's Prisoner.
600—A Woman to Be Rescued.
601—Nick Carter in Japan.
602—Talika, the Geisha Girl.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY

If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, 79-89 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK

THE NICK CARTER WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY. **BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS**

No other detective stories are half as interesting as those that appear in this publication. Nick Carter has been all over the world and has had experience with all kinds of criminals.

That's why, boys, his adventures holds one's interest from cover to cover. There is no brutality in Nick's make-up—he does not need it—he uses his wits. Do not fail to get the latest numbers from your newsdealer.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

574—The Mystery of the Empty Grave; or, Nick Carter's Deal from a Cold Deck.
575—The Yellow Beryl; or, Patsy Brings a High Roller to Book.
576—The Dead Man on the Roof; or, Nick Carter Clears an Honored Name.
577—A Double-barreled Puzzle; or, Patsy's Big Conundrum.
578—An Automobile Duel; or, Nick Carter and His Best Friend Work Together.
579—Jasper Ryan's Counter Move; or, Patsy's Remarkable Compact.
580—An International Conspiracy; or, Nick Carter's Second Assistant in a New Field.
581—Plotters Against a Nation; or, The Mystery of a Perfumed Handkerchief.
582—Mignon Duprez, the Female Spy; or, Patsy's Fight for Adelina.
583—A Mystery of High Society; or, Nick Carter's Tangled Puzzle.
584—A Million Dollars Reward; or, Nick Carter's Process of Induction.
585—The Signal of Seven Shots; or, Nick Carter's Struggle for His Life.
586—The "Shadow"; or, Nick Carter's Mysterious Pursuer.
587—A Dead Man's Secret; or, Nick Carter's Search for Counterfeit Plates.
588—A Victim of Magic; or, Nick Carter's Struggle with a Human Tiger.
589—A Plot Within a Palace; or, Nick Carter's Royal Client.
590—The Countess Zeta's Defense; or, Nick Carter in the Palace of a King.
591—The Princess' Last Effort; or, Nick Carter Wields a Royal Scepter.
592—The Two Lost Chittendens; or, Nick Carter's Clue by Cable.
593—Miguel, the Avenger; or, Nick Carter Among the Mexican Bandits.
594—Eulalia, the Bandit Queen; or, Nick Carter's Chase Across the Mountains.
595—The Crystal Mystery; or, Nick Carter and the Magic Eye.
596—A Battle of Wit and Skill; or, Nick Carter Meets with Defiance.
597—Vanderdyken, the Millionaire; or, Nick Carter's Rescue of an Heiress.
598—Patsy's Vacation Problem; or, Nick Carter's Assistant in a King's Service.
599—The King's Prisoner; or, Patsy Plays a Lone Hand.
600—A Woman to the Rescue; or, Nick Carter's Pupil at Castle Linmark.
601—Nick Carter in Japan; or, The Little Giant Acts as a Government Special.
602—Talika, the Geisha Girl; or, Nick Carter's Japanese Rival.
603—By Order of the Emperor; or, Nick Carter's Special Body-guard.

If you want any back numbers of this publication and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained from this office direct. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK CITY.